EXPLORING THE NONFICITION LITERACY

EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG CHILDREN

By

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Daniel:
“If you live to be a hundred, I want to live to be a hundred minus one day, so I never have to live without you.” Winnie the Pooh

Mom and Dad:
“You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them.”
Desmond Tutu

Melissa:
“Friendship isn't a big thing - It's a million little things.” Author Unknown

Dr. Sanders:
“Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish.” *John Quincy Adams*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When I think about my earliest literacy experiences, I remember loving to read books. I read books about princesses, toys that could talk, and animals with human qualities. I had the traditional Eric Carle, Dr. Seuss, and Golden Books that are popular in many middle class US homes with young children. My most vivid early literacy memories are with fiction books. As a young child, I do not remember having other genres of books. I read poetry and nonfiction as a high school student but not as a young child. As I became a fluent reader, I remember reading the newspaper, the cereal box, flyers from school, and the calendar on a daily basis. My parents taught me how to use reference materials like the phone book and dictionary to access information. When I reflect on early literacy experiences, I realize that fiction dominates my memories. My experience is not unique as the majority young children have limited exposure to nonfiction texts (Duke, 2000; Parkes, 2003, Wray & Lewis, 1997).

From a very young age, American children are exposed to fiction and narrative genres. Young children are exposed to stories through books, television shows, and oral stories. Books that are read aloud to them at home and in a preschool setting are predominately fiction (Dickinson, 2001; Wray & Lewis, 1997). Even recommended

reading lists for parents to read with their infants and toddlers, like the ones provided by Neumann, Hood & Neumann (2009) and Zeece & Churchill (2001) are dominated by fiction texts and seldom include other genres. Children have multiple opportunities to engage with fictionalized text within their natural environments, yet fiction is not the primary genre of adult life.

Nonfiction or informational texts are the prevalent genre in most areas of adult life. Adults are required to interact with nonfiction texts for employment and education. Nonfiction texts are resources to discover solutions to problems, to find information about particular people or places, and to fulfill one's curiosity (Pike & Mumper, 2004). Pike & Mumper (2004) stated that the purpose of information text is "to inform, instruct, and enlighten" (p.7). According to Mooney (2003), readers select informational materials from a variety of sources to meet their immediate needs and interests. To become an effective citizen, a conscious and critical consumer of information on a topic, and to function fully in the workplace, children have to learn how to become consumers of nonfiction texts.

The literacy diets of adult readers are saturated in nonfiction resources whereas young children's literacy experiences are dominated by fiction (Duke, 2000; Pappas 1993; Parkes, 2003, Wray & Lewis, 1997). Books read-aloud to preschool children are predominantly fiction because some teachers do not see this time as an opportunity to introduce new information (Dickinson, 2001). Dickinson (2001) concluded that teachers of three year old classrooms selected informational text for read-alouds 7% of the time whereas teachers of four year old classrooms incorporated informational texts 43% of the time. According to Duke (2000), early elementary school aged children in first and

second grade in a particular school were only exposed to informational texts 3.6 minutes a day. In their study of the amount of informational literature within basal reading series, Moss and Newton (2002) found that only 20% of the texts for second, fourth and sixth graders were nonfiction. Children are expected to become adept nonfiction readers, yet their limited experiences with this genre do not support that goal.

In American classrooms, extensive exposure to nonfiction texts frequently does not occur until fourth grade, when children progress from the "learning to read" stage to the "reading to learn" stage (Chall & Jacobs, 2003). During the "learning to read" stage, children focus on decoding words and becoming fluent readers as they spend most of their energy figuring out how sound segments are blended together to create words with little attention left over for constructing meaning (Chall & Jacobs, 2003). As children become more fluent readers, they are able to focus their attention on comprehending the text and shift from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." Children are naturally curious and may begin to read to learn about specific topics at an earlier age than promoted by educational settings (Heard & McDonough, 2009).

During the "reading to learn" stage, "texts become more varied, complex, and challenging linguistically and cognitively" (Chall & Jacobs, 2003, p. 1), and readers are expected to sift, synthesize, and apply new information from non-narrative texts related to subjects like science, social studies, and English into previous knowledge (Chall, Grosson de Leon, Hirsch, & Kamil, 2006; Duke, 2003; Mallet, 1999; Parks, 2004; Pike et al., 2004). According to Kurkjian & Livingston, (2005), "informational books can be difficult to read, in part because they are less familiar, but also because of the complexity of the organizational style of the writing, and the density of the ideas presented" (p. 592).

During this stage, some children find the mental demands of comprehending informational texts to be extremely difficult and begin to struggle with reading (Chall & Jacobs, 2003). The pattern of children demonstrating difficulty with informational texts at this point in their literacy development is referred to as "the fourth grade slump." (Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Chall, et al., 2006; Scholastic, 2009)

One way to avoid the fourth grade slump is to expose children to informational texts prior to fourth grade. Earlier exposure to informational texts increases children's genre knowledge, as they learn the vocabulary, syntax, and structure of these texts (Duke, 2003; Kayes & Duke, 1998; Leung, 2008; Mallett, 1999; Newkirk, 1986; Pappas, 1993; Parks, 2003; Pike & Mumper., 2004; Wray & Lewis, 1997). By interacting with nonfiction texts, children learn how to research new information and then organize and synthesize this information in to existing schemas (Camp, 2000; Duke, 2003; Leung, 2008; Mallett, 1999; Parkes, 2003; Pike & Mumper, 2004). Informational texts also act as models for young children's own attempts at expository writing, as children apply their knowledge of a genre to written language (Heller, 2006; Newkirk, 1986 Parkes, 2003; Smolkin & Donovan, 2003). Earlier exposure to nonfiction texts may also increase overall motivation to participate in literacy activities, as some children prefer to learn about the world around them instead of engaging with a fantasy world of narratives (Duke 2003; Mallett, 2003; Smolkin & Donovan, 2003; Soalt, 2005). "Early experience with informational texts builds a foundation for life-long learning and an understanding that reading is meaningful and purposeful. It generates further purposes for reading, extending how, what, and why children read" (Parkes, 2003, p. 20).

Research shows that early exposure to informational texts promotes later literacy learning (Mallett,1999; Parkes, 2003; Pike & Mumper 2004; Smolkin & Donovan, 2003), but the research primarily focuses on school aged children (Caswell & Duke, 1998; Duke, 2000; Heller, 2006; Moss & Newton, 2002; Newkirk, 1986; Pappas, 1993). Therefore, this research focuses on the earliest literacy experiences of children between the ages of two and five years old. By addressing a younger population, this study fills a gap in the research on the role of nonfiction in emergent literacy development.

Since nonfiction texts play such a critical role in "reading to learn" and in achieving full adult literacy, it is important that children understand how to navigate such texts. Children come to school with some knowledge of nonfiction through the routines used by them, their families, and their communities (Newkirk, 1986; Parkes, 2003). Children are familiar with routines involving informational texts like letters, emails, greeting cards, and lists because they have seen their families interact with these texts, not because they have received explicit instruction surrounding informational texts (Parkes, 2003). Early knowledge about informational texts is partly learned through social interaction, not necessarily explicit instruction (Cambourne, 2002).

Conversations can serve as another type of informational text as parents use expository language to transmit knowledge through explanations, comparisons, and cause and effect statements (Nippold, Hesketh, Duthie, & Mansfield, 2005). Bakhtin (1986) stated that people use different genres of speech during conversational interaction. Through interactions with family members and caregivers, children are exposed to both narrative and expository discourse. While research emphasizes the importance of early exposure to language (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Hart & Risley, 1995; Hart & Rislely,

1999; Morrow & Tracey, 2007), these works do not distinguish between speech genres and there is no direct mention of informational conversation. As part of this study, the role of the informational speech genre in the nonfiction literacy routines of young children will be examined in detail.

Purpose of Research

The goal of this study was to help fill the research gap concerning nonfiction texts with children from two to five years old. The earliest research I was able to locate on nonfiction with young children begins at the age of formal schooling (Duke, 2000; Newkirk, 1986; Pappas, 1993). Young children typically have a diet saturated in fiction literature (Parkes, 2003, Wray & Lewis, 1997) and the addition of informational texts is uncommon; however it is necessary for comprehensive literacy development (Duke, 2000; Newkirk, 1986; Parkes, 2003; Pappas, 1993; Wray et al.,1997). Therefore, this study emphasized nonfiction literacy routines across natural environments in order to understand the role nonfiction texts play in the emergent literacy development of young children between the ages of two and five years old.

The following research questions guided this study:

- Who are the sponsors of nonfiction literacy development for young children ages two to five?
- How do sponsors shape the nonfiction literacy routines and experiences for young children ages two to five?
- What kinds of nonfiction genre knowledge do young children construct during their nonfiction literacy routines?

In order to answer these questions, it was important to examine both the people and the environments that were responsible for a child's early experiences with informational

texts. A child is exposed to the literacy routines of their literacy sponsors which include any person or mediating entity/organization that plays a formative role in the literacy development of another individual. Brandt (1995) defined a literacy sponsor as "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, or model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy" (p. 2). Examples of sponsors are family members, teachers, supervisors, authors, and others in authoritative positions (Brandt, 1995, 2001). Sponsors vary in the degree of direct influence that they have over the literacy development of others.

A sponsor's individual interests, motivations, and understandings of literacy learning can influence the frequency and duration of interaction with informational texts that young children experience within their daily routines. The educational level and socio-economic status of the sponsor may also influence how a young child is exposed to nonfiction texts (Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Cushman, Barbier, Mazak, & Petrone, 2006; Hart & Risley, 1999; Holloway, 2004; Mui & Anderson, 2008; Perry, Kay, & Brown 2007; Rowsell, 2006). A child's literacy sponsors may encompass a wide variety of individuals depending on the cultural and social characteristics of his or her family. Since previous literacy research indicated that there was a potential for gender differences related to the selection of, modeling of, and interactions surrounding informational texts (Morgan, Nutbrown, & Hannon, 2009, Lehart & Roskes, 2003), the gendered experiences of the participants were also examined in this study.

In addition to examining the literacy sponsors, it was important to observe the natural environments of young children. The natural environments of children between the ages of two and five years old include the home, childcare, and preschool setting.

The literacy routines of the home and childcare settings will not necessarily be the same as each is influenced by cultural beliefs, education, and economics of the individuals in those contexts (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001: Hart & Risley, 1995, 1999; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Differences in frequency and duration of interaction with informational texts between children of different gender, different age, and different birth order were considered. In order to obtain a complete picture of the role of nonfiction texts in emergent literacy development, it was important to examine both the home and school environments, and the data demonstrated differences in the prevalence of informational texts between these natural environments.

Besides understanding the role of the literacy sponsors and environments, it was imperative to examine how children engaged with and responded to the informational texts. Texts are traditionally defined as written or printed documents, usually in the form of a book or an article. For this study, the definition of text was expanded to include a variety of experiences and communicative exchanges that supported informational learning. Reading printed materials such as books is only one component in literacy as a whole. Literacy development includes reading, writing, viewing, creating, listening, and speaking; in order to reflect these literacy components the definition of text needs to include oral language and visual images created by or with the children, in addition to printed texts. Oral language became a primary medium for informational text in the lives of these children.

This study resulted in two major findings: 1. the identification and description of the seven major sponsors of nonfiction literacy development for emergent literacy learners, and 2. the discovery of how informational speech genres were used to

unconsciously develop knowledge of expository text. Each of these findings will be explored in great detail in chapters four and five.

Terminology

Emergent literacy: a period of time from birth to formal schooling where young children are developing literacy knowledge and skills.

Fiction: a genre of literature that tells a story through characters, plots, setting, and theme.

Genre development: the emergent understanding a child has about the structure, function and the features of a particular genre.

Informational speech genre: oral exchange that incorporates definitions, explanations, and knowledge about a particular topic or event and follows the same text structures options as expository written language.

Informational text: a genre of literature that accurately explains a topic or event. Information may be provided in either a nonfiction or fictional format.

Literacy: the combination of oral and written language to obtain meaning, share information, for expression, and to form and maintain social relationships.

Literacy Experience: is an event or field trip (e.g. the zoo) that children attend on a regular basis.

Literacy Routine: a reoccurring event or interaction where individuals are engaged in reading, writing or speaking activities.

Literacy Sponsor: an individual, group or organization that fosters or hinders another individual's literacy. (Brandt, 1995)

Natural Environment: familiar settings where young children spend most of their time. Examples include home and school.

Nonfiction: is a genre of literature that includes the sciences, biography, history, geography, music, and more (Bamford & Kristo, 1998). Accurate and authentic information on specific topic is portrayed.

Young child: a child between the two and five years old.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RESEARCH LITERATURE

The current study focused on how children between the ages of two and five years old interact with and respond to nonfiction texts. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the existing theory and research in the following areas: emergent literacy, literacy routines within and across natural environments, and nonfiction literacy development. Within this body of research, there are a limited number of studies that focus on informational texts, and even fewer deal with informational texts with such a young population.

Emergent Literacy

Literacy development begins at birth when parents and caregivers expose children to the language, reading and writing practices of a particular community (National Association for the Education of Young Children/International Reading Association, 1998). Early exposure to literacy builds a foundation for later reading and writing development, including knowledge about oral language structure and function and knowledge about letters and print (Dale & Crain-Thoreson, 1999; Morrow, 2001; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001) "Children combine what they know about speech and language with what they know about print and become ready to learn to read and write" (Roth, Paul, & Pierolti, 2006). Emergent literacy skills develop in a reciprocal

relationship as children gain knowledge in one area of literacy, knowledge grows in the other areas (Gambrell, Morrow, & Pressley, 2007; Lonigan, 2004). Oral and written language skills are key components in the development of early literacy.

Emergent literacy development depends on the understanding and utilization of oral language. Oral language development includes knowledge of vocabulary, syntax, and narrative skills (Wasik, 2002; Whitehurst &Lonigan, 2001) and is the foundation for later phonological processing, decoding, and comprehension skills (Korat, 2005; Lonigan, 2004). An increased phonological sensitivity, the awareness of the sound system of language, is linked to better understanding of the connection between letters and sounds in words, understanding the phonological codes associated with whole words, and maintaining these codes in memory while concentrating on meaning making. (Cunningham, 2007; Wasik, 2004). According to Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001), emergent literacy skills are directly related to phonological awareness skills and strongly support reading success through the end of the second grade. Children who have difficulty with oral language are more likely to fall behind in overall literacy development (Martin, Lovat, & Purnell, 2004; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001). Children must develop speaking and listening skills as a component of becoming a reader and a writer.

From oral language to writing, writing emerges out of play. Children model their attempts at written language after the use of written language within their own environment (Bromley, 2007; Chapman 2006; Morrow, 2001). Children's early writing includes scribbling, drawing on paper, and experimentation with letter forms (Cusumano 2008; Roth, et al., 2006; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2002). Parents and teachers tend to

dismiss the importance of a child's early written language attempts since they do not represent typical written language forms (Newkirk, 1986). At this stage, talk and drawing are developing together (Chapman, 2006). Newkirk (1986) defines writing as the "whole production, text and picture, even the running commentary is a part of it" (p. 36). Between the ages of three and five yeas old, children begin to understand the difference between drawing and writing and understand the various purposes of writing (Roth, et al., 2006). The amount of time spent on writing should be equal to the amount of time devoted to reading (Bebaryshe, Buell, & Binder, 1996). Writing is learned through social interaction, mediation, co-construction of meaning (Bromley, 2007) and experiences with print (Dyson, 1995).

Print motivation is another crucial component of emergent literacy (Korat, 2005). A child's interest in print, or print motivation, will foster repeated interactions with texts from which children understand that print is meaningful (Lonigan, 2004). Children learn the structure and function of written language necessary for reading and writing by repeated engagement in different genres (Dyson, 2002; Senechal, et al., 2001; Smolkin & Donovan, 2003). Exposure to a variety of genres promotes genre development.

This study examined how the three components of emergent literacy reading, writing, and speaking - were incorporated into the literacy routines of children between the ages of two and five years old as a means of developing nonfiction literacy knowledge.

Emergent Literacy Routines

Emergent literacy is cultivated through repeated interactions with language and texts. Interactions that occur frequently within a child's life can be classified as a routine.

A literacy routine is a "regular use of a variety of techniques to enhance children's abilities to listen, to observe, to imitate, and to develop their language, reading, and writing skills" (Lawhon & Cobb, 2002, p. 113). Literacy routines are not bound to time or place but instead may occur throughout the day as the child experiences literacy in daily activities and events; these routines also help to establish structure for the interactions (Berger, 1998, Partridge, 2004).

Children's literacy abilities grow when there are opportunities to share, act, sing, classify, observe, make decisions, recognize and understand relationships, read and tell stories, interact, talk, listen, and play (Lawhon & Cobb, 2002). A literacy routine establishes a naturally occurring social exchange where children experience oral and written language (Fiese, Eckert, & Spagnola, 1993). Typical literacy routines for young children may include the language surrounding literacy events, dialogical book reading, and songs and games that focus on emergent literacy skills. The accompanying conversation in the early literacy routines of young children plays a critical role in emergent literacy development (Bus, 2002; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Evans & Shaw, 2008; Hart & Risley, 1999; Roth, et al., 2006). All daily routines, including dressing, feeding, and playing, are also opportunities to foster language development (Berger, 1998). The amount and type of language incorporated into these routines lays the foundation for later literacy learning as children are exposed to vocabulary, concepts and letter sound correspondence. Effective routines for promoting early literacy are well established in the educational literature but routines emphasizing nonfiction experiences are limited in the literature.

Bakhtin (1986) asserts that speech is dialogic in nature. Spoken language or utterances are bound by the contexts in which they are spoken. Each chain of utterances is connected to the utterances said before and after a particular statement. "Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality of the sphere of speech communication" (Bakhtin, 1986, p.91). In a chain of utterances, it is possible to identify changes in topic, changes in speakers, and the attitudes of the speakers and the listeners. (Bakhtin, 1986). These changes indicate that different speech genres do exist and are used in conjunction with one another. Dialogue is frequently incorporated into literacy routines to develop a child's interest in a topic, maintain attention, or prolong the literacy event, but such speech has not been classified as falling within a nonfiction speech genre. The literature on children's informational conversations and its connections to genre knowledge is very limited.

Just as speech is dialogical, reading may also be dialogical. Dialogical reading is a social process between the child and the parent with both participants contributing to the interaction. Through dialogical reading, children learn vocabulary (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2006; Kim, 2009; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Morrow, 2001) phonological awareness (Kim, 2009), and print awareness (Armbruster et al., 2006; Dickinson, 1994; Levy, Gong, Hessels, Evans, & Jared, 2006; Strickland & Morrow, 2000). Dialogical reading contributes to a child's motivation and interest in repeatedly participating in literacy events (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Morrow, 2001; Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2002) and provides one way for parents to pass their literacy knowledge on to their children (Justice & Pullen, 2003).

Access to books and other literacy materials is a vital piece of dialogical literacy routines. Easy access to literacy related materials encourages participation in reading and writing activities (Armbruster, et al, 2006; Morrow, 2001; National Center for Family Literacy, 2009; Roth et al., 2006). Children should have access to variety of genres including "fiction, nonfiction, fantasy, poetry, and stories about other cultures" (Bates & Bates, 1999 p.13; Kiefer, et al, 2007; Morrow, 2001). By exposing young children to a variety of genres, they are developing an understanding of the structure, components, and function of each genre. Reading materials are not limited to books as parents and children can read menus, license plates, food boxes, and grocery lists (Berger, 1998). Although the literature demonstrates that exposing children to a variety of genres is important for full literacy development, little is know about exactly what genres young children are exposed to or what their experiences with nonfiction look like.

These studies highlight the importance of early interactions with books to promote early literacy learning yet informational texts are rarely mentioned. In order to fill in the research gap, this study examined the dialogical interactions and other literacy routines between parents and young children with informational text.

Emergent Literacy across Natural Environments

Family Literacy

A child's home literacy experiences are a major contributing factor to emergent literacy development (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001: Hart & Risley,1995; Hart & Risley, 1999; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). A study by Roberts, Jugerns, and Burchinal (2005) examined the impact of four home literacy practices on the emergent literacy skills of African American children between the ages of three and five. The four home literacy

practices included the frequency of shared book reading, maternal strategies and sensitivity during book reading, child's interest in book reading, and an overall responsiveness of the home environment. The results of this study concluded that the "most consistent predictor of children's language and literacy skills" was the overall responsiveness of the home environment as it "predicted all four of the language and literacy outcomes" (Roberts et al., p. 355). By creating a responsive home, families fostered literacy and language development in young children.

The home environment is not limited to the physical house and it also includes the members of a family. Family in a broad sense of the word includes those individuals who repeatedly interact with a child, including parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and caregivers. Everyone in the family plays a role in supporting the literacy development of young children (Brandt, 2001; Karther, 2002; Lehart & Roskes 2003; Mctavish, 2007; Mui & Anderson, 2008; Perry, Kay, & Brown, 2007; Saracho, 2008). Fathers and siblings are equally valuable in the literacy routines of young children (Hart & Roskes, 2003; Morgan, Nutbrown, & Hannon, 2009). Older siblings teach the younger siblings the "household standards that apply to literacy and its role in life" (Hart & Risley, 2003, p. 97). Literacy knowledge is also passed on from generation to generation through interaction (Brandt, 2001; Grabasch, 1997; Heath, 1983; Wasik, Dobbings, & Hermann, 2002). The family's role in promoting literacy development is well defined, but there is limited information about their role in specifically fostering nonfiction literacy development.

Family literacy is defined as the naturally occurring reading, writing, conversation, and communication practices shared between the family and the child at

home (Rowsell, 2006; Tracey & Morrow, 2006; Wasik et al., 2002). A family's view of literacy is influenced by their own cultural views of literacy, social economic status, and educational levels (Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Barbier, Mazak, & Petrone, 2006; Holloway, 2004; Mui & Anderson, 2008; Perry et al., 2007; Rowsell, 2006). Families create literacy rich home environments by providing children with physical and social resources that contribute to sharing literacy knowledge with one another (Hart & Risley, 2003; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). The components of a literacy rich environment include access to a variety of books and other materials for both adults and children (Mui & Anderson, 2008), adults as models of reading, writing, and speaking, frequent and extended interactive reading, writing, and conversation between the parent and child (Hart & Risley, 2003; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Language and literacy events are a part of daily life and are experienced through explicit and implicit teaching. A young child's literacy learning is influenced both by his or her own family dynamics and resources.

Shirley Brice Heath (1983) determined that individuals in different communities use reading and writing for different purposes including completing tasks related to daily life, maintaining social relationships, learning information about others, and confirming beliefs and attitudes. High socio-economic communities tended to have more purposes for reading and writing than less advantaged communities as they are more likely to use reading and writing activities to discover new information, to be critical of information, and to meet educational purposes (Heath, 1983).

Other researchers have confirmed that children from more affluent communities have a wider range of experiences with literacy and language than children from less fortunate families (Korat, Klein, Segal-Drori, 2007; Hart & Risley, 1995). According to

De Temple (2001), children who have access to books demonstrate increased storybook vocabulary and comprehension skills in kindergarten than children who did not have their own books. Children who have books are likely to "read" these books on repeated occasions which promote the development of genre knowledge (Donovan & Smolkin, 2006; Pappas, 1993; Purcell-Gates, 2004; Smolkin & Donovan, 2003). Children from less advantaged families typically have less experience with storybooks; therefore their genre knowledge maybe less than that of their peers who have wide exposure to storybooks (Donovan & Smolkin 2006; Purcell-Gates, 2004). The academic literature speaks to young children's experiences with storybooks but, again does not widely address experiences with nonfiction or informational texts.

Families who have books and other literacy resources tend to use more non-immediate talk, connecting what is presented in the text to the child's own life experiences, while interacting with their children, than families who do not have these resources (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Korat, et al., 2007). More immediate talk might include reading straight from the text or talking about the illustrations, with little other discussion, extension, or interaction. In one study (DeTemple, 2001), children who are exposed to a higher percentage of non-immediate talk scored higher on early literacy and language measures than children who had limited exposure to non-immediate talk. Non-immediate talk builds vocabulary, background knowledge, and comprehension skills that are necessary for later literacy learning, indicating that the manner in which parents read books to their children influences later literacy skills (DeTemple, 2001). The type of talk is just as important as the type of book shared with young children. In DeTemple's

(2001) study, the exploration of talk occurred while children and their families read fiction books and did not include any conversations with nonfiction texts.

Based on Bakhtin's theory of speech genres (1986), I propose that non-immediate talk serves as a foundation for the informational speech genre. With non-immediate talk, parents use what is happening within the text as a one springboard to teach their young children about the world. This informational conversation explains, informs, and connects the texts to the child's own experiences (Bus, 2002). These dialogical connections between the text and the child's life form a chain of utterances (Bakhtin, 1986) centered on a specific topic that fosters novel vocabulary development and build background knowledge. In the present study, I examined the interactions between children and their caregivers for instances of informational speech chains that support nonfiction literacy development. Immediate and non-immediate talk demonstrates at least two different speech genres. In addition to these two speech genres, I looked for other possible speech genres used during nonfiction literacy occasions.

In addition to non-immediate talk, Dickinson & Tabors (2001) discovered that the amount of talk children were exposed to at home was another critical component of the home environment. Children who were from a home environment with "interesting talk with lots of new words" demonstrated higher level literacy skills when entering kindergarten (Tabors, et al., 2001). Similarly, Hart and colleagues (1999) found that children who are consistently exposed to language are more experienced with words and conversations than children who have limited exposure to language. Hart & Risley (1995) concluded that middle class children are exposed to an average of 700-800 utterances per hour in which one-half are directly addressed to the child. These experiences with

language build a child's vocabulary, background knowledge, and understanding of language structures which are all components of emergent literacy (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Hart & Risley, 1995; Hart & Risley, 1999; Tabors, et al., 2001). In the professional literature, the child's language was examined for the amount and type of vocabulary and not as a potential informational text or speech genre.

The amount of talk a child is exposed to varies from one family to another and changes overtime as it is based on birth order, gender, and size of the family. According to Hart and Risley (1995, 1999) parents speak more to only children than second or third born children. Later born children are exposed more to talk from siblings than parents (Hart & Risley, 1995; Hart & Risley, 1999). Families with more children use almost 200 more words an hour than families with one child (Hart & Risley, 1999). Parents speak the same amount to a child regardless of gender. The amount of language a child is exposed to during the first three years of life changes. Initially parents are responsible for all of the language incorporated into daily routines, but as children develop language, they become more responsible for initiating and maintaining the conversation themselves (Hart & Risley, 1995; Hart & Risley, 1999).

A parent's education level is also an important factor in emergent literacy development, but regardless of educational level, all parents provide literacy learning opportunities (Paratore, Melzi, & Krol-Sinclair, 2003). Since parents with higher education levels may spend more time engaging their children in literacy related activities (Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Hart & Risley,1999, Heath, 1983; Korat, 2009; Paratore, et al., 2003), promoting literacy routines (Paratore, et al., 2003 Heath, 1983), talking while reading (Bracken et al, 2008; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Hart & Risley, 1999), and

accessing resources related to literacy development (Paratore, et al., 2003), their children tend to demonstrate increased emergent literacy skills when they enter kindergarten (Korat, 2009). These children demonstrate increased knowledge of vocabulary, story concepts, print awareness, and generally higher motivation to participate in reading activities (Bracken & Fischel, 2008; Hart & Risley, 1999; Korat, 2009). Parents with higher education levels are likely to see literacy as a necessary tool for later success and engage children in related activities (Bracken & Fischel, 2008). The differences in cultural beliefs, education levels, and socio-economic status among families contribute to differences in the emergent literacy development of young children.

The studies reviewed here emphasize the valuable role that families play in the emergent literacy development of young children, including early exposure to language but do not specifically address the families' role in fostering nonfiction knowledge. The present study highlighted the role of family members, caregivers, and teachers in sponsoring the nonfiction literacy development of young children and the informational language, or non-immediate talk, used within literacy routines to promote emergent literacy development.

Literacy in Preschool or Childcare

Literacy learning is not bound to the home environment, as many young children are also exposed to the literacy routines of preschools and child care settings. According to Morrow and Tracey (2007), "children who have high quality preschool experiences with emphasis on language and literacy are more likely to acquire strong language and literacy skills that translate into achievement in the early grades and throughout their schooling" (p.64). Preschool experiences related to reading and writing depend upon

classroom variables such as age group, class size, time devoted to literacy activities, and individual teacher's literacy beliefs (Schickendanz, 2003).

Teachers and care givers vary in their techniques for reading to children as some may read the entire text, ask and answer questions, or label and describe what is happening. Teacher talk in preschool influences receptive language skills through first grade (Neuharth-Pritchett, 2007). Dickinson (2001) found that classroom teachers were more likely to include dialogical reading strategies with four year-olds than with younger children. Children with dialogical reading experience demonstrated higher receptive vocabulary scores at the end of kindergarten (Dickinson, 2001). Children with increased receptive vocabulary understand the meanings of more words which influence later development of comprehension skills.

Dickinson (2001) also found that young children in childcare settings are not exposed to large amounts of shared book reading. One third of the seventy preschool children participated in book sharing activities lasting 25 minutes or less each week and another quarter of the students interacted with books less than 50 minutes a week (Dickinson, 2001). In addition, Dickinson (2001) examined the genre of books selected for read-alouds with young children in a preschool setting and concluded that only 7% of 30 three year old preschool teachers selected informational texts for their read-alouds, and 43% of 40 four year old teachers read realistic fiction, books that related to real life experiences. This study leaves the reader with the question of the proportion of nonfiction books read to the number of fiction books read. Dickinson's work and the other studies noted above highlight the teacher's role in fostering nonfiction literacy development

through preschool literacy routines and show that further research is needed to examine how young children are exposed to nonfiction in preschool or childcare settings.

Nonfiction Literacy Development

Genre is the kind of literary work, classified by its structure and function, that broadly includes narratives, informational texts, and poetry (Kiefer, et al., 2007). Genre knowledge is the emergent understanding a child has about the structure, function, and the features of a particular type of text. It is fostered through multiple exposures to a particular genre and explicit instruction (Donovan et.al, 2006; Donovan et.al, 2002; Dyson, 2004). Studies of genre knowledge show that it often "develops prior to conventional writing abilities" (Donovan & Smolkin 2006, p. 131). According to Dyson (2004), children learn genres though institutions like homes, churches, and popular culture. "Children draw on their cultures' uses of literacy as resources for writing, including an array of literature, popular culture, and media texts" (Chapman, 2006, p 30). Familiar genres serve as a model for young children's own attempts at writing, but children are typically exposed to one genre, narrative, and have limited exposure to other genres including nonfiction or expository texts (Duke, 2000, Parkes, 2004; Pappas 1993; Wray & Lewis, 1997).

Narrative texts are the dominant genre in literacy experiences for young children. Children learn about narratives through exposure to oral conversation as they are passed down from generation to generation. Children have repeated experiences with narrative texts which provide the basis for storybook language, story structure, and the components of story. They also learn rich vocabulary and explanation skills through listening to and retelling familiar narratives (Fiese, et al., 1993), but narratives are only one part of

written language. However, in order to become literate, it is important to obtain knowledge about other genres (Donovan & Smolkin, 2002). Young children's knowledge of the narrative genre is well documented, but evidence of their nonfiction genre knowledge is limited.

It was traditionally thought that other genres would be too difficult to understand, would interfere with later literacy development, and would not interest young children (Donovan & Smolkin, 2002; Duke et al., 2003; Pappas, 1993). Children may often be expected to learn to read prior to reading to learn; therefore, they may not be exposed to nonfiction texts until they are reading independently (Duke et al., 2003; Pappas, 1993). However, more recent research shows that children are not only able to comprehend but are also capable of producing informational texts (Donovan& Smolkin, 2002; Donovan 2001; Kayes, et al. 1998; Mooney, 2003).

Pappas (1993) examined the genre knowledge of kindergarten students when engaged in pretend reading of narrative and informational texts. She found that students not only understood but were also able to verbalize differences between narrative and informational texts. Children used the appropriate linguistic features for both narrative and informational texts when they were pretending to read (Pappas, 1993). This study challenges the myth that children are not ready for or do not enjoy informational texts.

Newkirk (1986) examined his own children's early writing to determine what genres they were representing in written form. From an early age, children demonstrated knowledge of both narrative and expository genres (Newkirk, 1986). Children learn that different genres are for different purposes. Children use drawings with or without text to either tell a story or to provide information (Newkirk, 1986). With expository pictures,

children often utilize the verb *to be*, whereas, with narrative pictures, children tell about a stream of events (Newkirk, 1986).

Children may also demonstrate their knowledge of different genres through play. It is common to see young children imitating parents by making lists- a type of expository writing which can be used to categorize and sequence information (Newkirk, 1986). Children also learn that written language has a sense of power that oral language does not when they use written language to control their space and demonstrate possession by writing "keep out" signs or their own name's on their possessions (Newkirk, 1986). In each of these cases, the child is demonstrating an understanding of expository language. Newkirk's work was instrumental in the field of nonfiction literacy research because he demonstrated the types of nonfiction writing that occur in children's everyday lives, both inside and outside of school. However, he focused on children in grades first through third. Therefore the present study, exploring the nonfiction experiences of young children, expands upon Newkirk's work by examining the nonfiction reading and writing of children two to five years old.

To summarize, emergent literacy begins at birth and is promoted across natural environments. Through multiple exposures and repetitions, young children develop reading, writing, and oral language skills. Many early literacy experiences are devoted to the genre of fiction. For younger children, exposure to the genre of nonfiction is limited. Nonfiction books were traditionally reserved for adolescent and adult readers, even though children have a natural curiosity for understanding the world around them. Informational texts require the reader to access the desired material from sources like diagrams, labels, and captions (Mooney, 2004). In order to read and write informational

texts, children "need to know and understand how to select, sift, comprehend, synthesize, and analyze information" (Parkes, 2003, p. 21). The research reviewed here shows younger children are capable of reading and producing informational texts to meet their own interests and needs (Donovan & Smolkin, 2002; Mallett, 1999; Newkirk, 1986; Pappas, 1993; Pike & Mumper, 2004) but it includes very little examination of toddler and preschool aged children's interactions with informational texts. This study examined how young children experienced nonfiction text within the literacy routines, home and school and the sponsors of nonfiction genre knowledge. This study was designed to fill the literature gap that young children are not exposed to nonfiction texts prior to formal schooling (Donovan & Smolkin 2002, Donovan, 2001; Duke, 2000; Kayes et al 1998).

The present study examined how young children experienced nonfiction text within the home and school literacy routines and the sponsors of nonfiction genre knowledge. It was designed to investigate the question of if and how young children are not exposed to nonfiction texts prior to formal schooling. The present study builds upon and extends the research related to nonfiction literacy in the areas of emergent literacy, family literacy, and nonfiction genre knowledge in the following ways:

1. The participants ranged in age from two to five years old which is a younger population available in the research related to nonfiction genre knowledge.
2. The participants were simultaneously observed within and across natural environments to understand their experiences with nonfiction.
3. The definition of informational text was expanded to include expository language, dramatic play, and art projects.

Socio-Cultural Learning Theories

In addition to reviewing the research literature that frames the present study, it is also necessary to consider the literacy and learning theories that….contribute to my understanding of literacy. The socio-cultural and socio-linguistic theories which inform this work focus on the role of culture in literacy development. According to Gee (2004), "literacy practices are almost always fully integrated with, interwoven into, constituted part of, the very texture of wider practices that involve talk, interaction, values and beliefs" (p. 45). Literacy learning is constructed within the confines of one's culture making it impossible to tease out the literacy practice from the value and purposes literacy serves within a community (Gee, 2004; Heath, 1983). Language is a cultural force that guides social interactions in the promotion of literacy learning. In this study, literacy sponsors used the socially agreed upon language and its various purposes to help young children create meaning from nonfiction texts (Gee, 2008). Literacy learning is a social dance between individuals and their culture.

For young children, nonfiction literacy knowledge is constructed through the social interactions between their literacy sponsors and themselves. These interactive experiences are not independent of one another as they are situated within the social context of the culture of the natural environment (New, 2002; Tracey, et al., 2006). Through social interaction and language, families model the purposes of literacy within their daily lives for their children (Heath, 1983). "Learning to read and write is now seen as a matter of families, communities, child service agencies, and schools" (Lehart, et al. 2003). Social interactions determine how children learn the value of informational texts

within their own culture. Therefore, I observed these interactions at home and at school and inquired about these literacy events during interviews with the mothers and teachers.

Literacy is not learned in isolation; it is a social practice. Vygotsky (1986) identified two primary ways that learning occurs: through social interaction and through language. Young children's literacy experiences are shaped, modeled, and scaffolded by parents, teachers, and caregivers (Vygotsky 1978). Both the parent and the child have an affect on the construction of meaning as each participant contributes different ideas and thoughts about a particular text that are used as the foundation for future literacy experiences (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Literacy develops through the social roles and nurturing relationships a child experiences and is used to maneuver within a social world (Bellegrini, 2002; Dyson, 2002; Gee, 2004). Children need numerous opportunities to observe and practice the various functions of literacy, including social interaction, education, and entertainment (Morrow, 2001). As a result, research in literacy should make attempts to include the multiple sites and experiences of literacy.

Through interactions, children learn the skills to navigate the "sociocultural conventions" of varying social contexts including the grammatical features and structures of written language, the phonological rules, and the use of different discourses (Verhoeven, 1997). Oral language provides a foundation for understanding the structure of language and builds receptive and expressive vocabulary, which in turn assists students with the ability to read fluently and construct meaning from text (Chambers, 2003; Tracey & Morrow, 2006; Verhoeven, 1997). Children implicitly learn their cultural models through "talk, interaction, and engagement with texts and media" (Gee, 2004);

therefore, observations of these exchanges were vital in understanding how young children develop nonfiction literacy knowledge.

A significant learning tool, for these social interactions is language - the vehicle through which literacy knowledge is constructed, negotiated, and promoted between families and young children. Language guides social interactions and helps to create meaningful literacy events (Dickinson, et al., 2001; Hart & Risley, 1999). Language reflects and constructs the context in which it is used; therefore, it provides information about the social interactions that contribute to mutual shared knowledge (Bloor & Bloor, 2007; Gee, 1999).The conversation incorporated into the nonfiction literacy routines of young children are the result of the literacy sponsors' own cultural and social view of language and literacy.

In pointing toward the cultural and linguistic influences that may contribute to a child's nonfiction literacy knowledge, these theories were foundational in understanding how young children interacted with informational texts within literacy environments and across natural environments in the present study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study illuminated how nonfiction texts were incorporated into the literacy routines of young children. Children between the ages of two and five are too young to be solely responsible for their own literacy routines, therefore their early literacy experiences are shaped by both social interactions with others and the social contexts surrounding these interactions. This study identified the literacy sponsors, any person or any organization that played a formative role in the early literacy development of the participants (Brandt, 1995). For these children, it was assumed that parents and teachers would be two nonfiction literacy sponsors, but the nature of their sponsorship was unknown. In addition to parents and teachers, I explored other possible literacy sponsors and how their sponsorship was enacted in the literacy development of young children. With a focus on the role of early exposure to nonfiction literacy of toddlers and preschool aged children, this study adds to the small body of research that addresses the role of early exposure to this genre in literacy learning (Donovan & Smolkin 2002; Mallette, 1999; Newkirk, 1986; Pappas, 1993; Pike & Mumper, 2004).

Research Questions

The following research questions served as a guide for examining the nonfiction literacy routines of young children.

- Who are the sponsors of nonfiction literacy development for young children ages two to five years old?
- How do sponsors shape the nonfiction literacy routines and experiences for young children ages two to five years old?
- What kinds of nonfiction genre knowledge do young children construct during their nonfiction literacy routines?

Epistemology and Theoretical Perspective

The constructionist epistemology focuses on an individual's experiences as a tool to construct meaning (Crotty, 2003). Construction of knowledge is complex; it involves the individual's perception and interpretation, along with being influenced by one's social and cultural knowledge and beliefs (Crotty, 2003; Gee, 2004). Meaning does not exist as a separate entity but is constructed and negotiated through social interaction within a particular social context (Crotty, 2003; Patton, 2002). Cultural experiences and understandings support countless interpretations of the world resulting in multiple realities that are subject to change in a new context (Crotty, 2003; Gee, 2004). Knowledge is accepted and socially reinforced by individuals from similar cultural models.

The interpretivist theoretical perspective falls under the constructionist epistemology and holds that meaning is constructed to understand and explain a social reality. This study set out to understand the social reality of how young children's

nonfiction literacy experiences were shaped by literacy sponsors, which generated the the first two research questions that addressed questions of nonfiction literacy sponsorship. Social reality is determined by examining the social actors who negotiate meaning in common activities (Scott & Morrison, 2005; Crotty, 2003). In this case, the social actors were both the sponsors and the participant children and the common activities were the nonfiction literacy routines and experiences. These routines and experiences were observed on multiple occasions to determine how these social actors negotiate meaning through interactions, literacy events, and within in different environments. The language included in these interactions were instrumental in understanding how children experience nonfiction at home and school; therefore, it became a key data point.

The social actors' cultural values and beliefs helped to define the role of nonfiction in the lives of their children including the amount and type of nonfiction literacy activities that they facilitated at home and school. In order to truly understand how these social actors negotiated the meaning and purpose of nonfiction, it was important to obtain their impression of these events through self report (Scott & Morrision, 2005), and through multiple observations. The complete social reality of how young children experience nonfiction could not be understood without the considering multiple view points. Therefore, multiple case study methodology was used to gather different families' and teachers' experiences with nonfiction literacy experiences.

Within these frameworks, I explored how children construct nonfiction genre knowledge through interactions with their literacy sponsors. I focused on the social context in which these interactions occurred, including the role of the participants, the use

of language, and the use of texts, to determine how the young children developed nonfiction genre knowledge with the context of their natural environments.

Methodology

From an interpretivist perspective, this study examined the role of literacy sponsors and routines in the nonfiction literacy development of thirteen young children at home and school. Through the methodology of multiple case studies (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Yin 2003), data related to sponsorship and nonfiction literacy events within and across natural environments was collected via multiple observations and interviews. The data was analyzed with the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to develop a broader understanding of how young children experience and develop nonfiction literacy. A multiple or collective case study simultaneously investigates several cases in depth to identify themes or patterns of behavior within and across literacy events (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Patton, 2002) as a means of uncovering "new and unusual interactions, events, explanations, and interpretations" (Hays, 2004, p. 218). Through multiple case research, each child's individual nonfiction literacy routines and events were examined to discover how these young children were developing nonfiction literacy at home and school. It was possible to examine the routine itself, the social actors involved, the language incorporated into these routines, and how these routines were facilitated by specific literacy sponsors (Crotty, 2003). Multiple case study research is considered to be an evolving process (Hays, 2004), and the design of the study is flexible to the particular needs of the research questions (Yin, 1989).

Each child/parent/caregiver combination was considered an individual case since a child's experience with nonfiction text is personalized to his/her own literacy routines and environments. Each child and his/her social world was considered an individual case bound by the time and space of their own natural environments (Barone, 2004; Hancock, et al., 2006; Patton, 2002). Personal beliefs, cultural priorities, and interests determine how nonfiction literacy knowledge is passed down from generation to generation. Each family defines the role of nonfiction texts within their world through literacy events, activities and language (Heath, 1983). The literacy routines of young children in two natural environments, their home and preschool/childcare, were observed to develop an in-depth understanding of the literacy sponsors and routines that fostered early genre knowledge of informational texts. By examining the different routines and events of both natural environments, it was possible to identify the cultural values and purposes of nonfiction. The influence of factors like social economic status (SES), education levels, and gender norms were explored through observations and interviews to understand each case individually and as a collective whole. Each child's construction of nonfiction literacy knowledge was analyzed within the various environments to discover patterns of nonfiction literacy learning. Just as no two families are exactly alike, no two nonfiction experiences are alike.

One critical component of case study methodology is knowing each case in a multifaceted way. Therefore, data should illustrate the case from a variety of angles and sources to provide a detailed description of the social reality of how children experience nonfiction. Multiple data sources afforded information about specific nonfiction literacy routines including the general nature of the routine and the knowledge constructed during

the routines that would not be available from just one data source (Barone, 2004; Hancock et al., 2006; Yin, 1984). Through multiple interviews and observations, I was able to understand how the families and teachers valued literacy in their natural environments, how they incorporated nonfiction and informational texts into the daily routines and events with their young children, and how young children accessed nonfiction on a daily basis. The various routines presented at home and school emphasized the sponsors' views of nonfiction, the role it plays in the lives of their children/students, and their personal definition of literacy. Multiple observations of both the home and school routines provided the opportunity to see nonfiction literacy development in different contexts: reading books, playing play dough, dramatic play, and community events. Each child was observed three times at home for approximately forty five to sixty minutes per visit and three times at school, participating in whatever literacy routine was currently being facilitated by the sponsor. Knowledge about the role of nonfiction texts within the lives of young children was also constructed through interviews with the child's mother and teacher. The interviews focused on how these individuals and the natural environments contributed to the child's nonfiction literacy learning. The artifacts supported the examination of how young children develop nonfiction literacy knowledge. Each piece of data not only illuminated each case in a multi-faceted way and this knowledge was combined to create a mosaic-like image of how these young children developed nonfiction literacy knowledge.

Description of Sampling Methods and Setting

For this study, I investigated the nonfiction literacy routines of thirteen young children between the ages of two and five years old. A purposive sample was obtained

through advertisements at local daycares, church nurseries, preschools, and university settings seeking families with at least one child between the ages of two and five years old (Patton, 2002). As previously noted, this population is rarely considered when examining the role of nonfiction texts in early literacy development (Duke, 2000; Newkirk, 1989; Pappas, 1993). Out of the twenty schools contacted, ten schools agreed to distribute the recruitment flyer to families through email, newsletters, and on communal bulletin boards. Nine families participated in this study.

These nine families represented thirteen children between two and five years of age, with four families having two children participating in this study. With the exception of developmental articulation substitutions, the children in this study were typically developing in hopes to gain the most information about nonfiction literacy practices of young children, as children who demonstrate developmental delays may not have the same opportunities to experience this genre. See Table 1 for information about each participant.

Through contact with a variety of educational settings, I sought diversity among the participants: families of varying SES, educational levels, and cultural backgrounds. However, all of the families who agreed to participate in this study were similar in their demographic background: middle class Caucasian Americans with parents having at least two years of college education. All of the young participants were from two parent homes and had at least one sibling. All of the parents had attended some form of post-secondary education; eight parents had earned a bachelor's degree and five parents had earned graduate degree. The estimated family income ranged from $40,000 to over $100,000 annually. All of the fathers worked a full time job, where as the population included five

stay-at-home mothers, two mothers who were employed part-time, and one mother who was employed full-time. Family members provided a great deal of information about the children's nonfiction literacy development, but due to their homogeneous backgrounds they may provide a limited representation of how young children overall engage in nonfiction texts. These families were aware of the importance of early literacy experiences with young children and made extra effort to expose their children to literacy.

All of the children attended an educational setting, which included three preschool-type settings and two home school settings. The amount of time each child spent in the school setting varied from two days a week to five days a week. A Christian-based religious philosophy was fundamental at all schools and the children attended such events as "Jesus time" or chapel to learn specific religious teachings. The lack of ethnic diversity among the students at each of these schools was apparent with the majority of the populations being white middle class Americans.

The teachers in all of these settings were female with varying degrees of education and teaching experience. Educational levels ranged from a high school diploma to a master's degree. All of the teachers allowed classroom observations of literacy routines but not all agreed to be interviewed. Five classroom teachers, representing six children agreed to participate in both parts of the study. Three children were homeschooled, therefore their parent was also their teacher and one interview served both areas.

Table 1

Description of Participants

Child's Name	Demographics	Age	Siblings	School	Description
Allen	Mom is applying to nursing school. She teaches computer class at Kids Day Out	4	2 older sisters 1 twin brother	Kids Day Out: Private-religious female teacher -Early Childhood Degree Music, Spanish, Computers, Chapel	Interested in race cars & trucks Quiet at school Watches out for his brother Not interested in writing
Richard	Sibling of Allen	4	2 older sisters 1 twin brother	Kids Day Out: Private-religious female teacher -Early Childhood Degree Music, Spanish, Computers, Chapel	Interested in race cars & trucks Quiet at school Watches our for his brother Not interested in writing
Kate	Mom is a child development specialist. Dad is a pharmacist.	3	1 younger brother	Kids Day Out: Private-religious female teacher Ballet, Music, Spanish, Computers, Chapel	Enjoys fantasy & realistic fiction Beats to her own drummer More social at home than at school
Parker	Mom teaches health class.	3	1 older brother	Kids Day Out: Private-religious female teacher Music, Spanish, Computers, Chapel	Interested in dinosaurs & Legos
Josie	Mom is a nurse and the president of the school.	3	1 older sister 1 younger brother	Kids Day Out: Private-religious female teacher -Early Childhood Degree Music, Spanish, Computers, Chapel	Enjoys fantasy, especially princesses & television characters Enjoys dramatic play Starting to decode
Michael	Sibling of Josie	2	2 older sisters	Kids Day Out: Private-religious female teacher -working towards degree Music, Spanish, Computers, Chapel	Active boy Interested in trucks, cars, & tools Vocabulary expanding at a rapid rate
Rose	Mom is a stay-at-home mom with a graduate degree. Dad travels internationally for his job	2	1 older brother	Little Saints Preschool: Private-Catholic female teacher- Early Childhood Degree Music, Chapel	Interested in art projects Youngest one in her class Very quiet at school but talkative at home
James	Sibling of Rose	4	1 younger sister	Little Saints Preschool: Private-Catholic female teacher - Associates Degree Music, Chapel	Interested in art projects Talkative at home but not at school Seeks out information
Felicity	Mom is a stay-at-home mom with a graduate degree. Dad is an engineer.	3	1 older sister	Little Lambs Preschool: Private-religious female teacher Jesus Time	Interested in concept & fantasy books Shy at first
Alex	Mom is a stay-at-home mom that used to be a teacher.	5	1 older brother	Little Lambs Preschool: Private-religious female teacher/director Jesus Time	Interested in Legos & dinosaurs Starting to read Interacts with other children
Joe	Mom is a stay-at-home mom and teaches a home school co-op. Dad is in missionary school.	2	1 older brother 1 younger sister	Home School: Follows religious-based curriculum Home School Cooperative Learning	Imitates siblings Vocabulary expanding rapidly Very active
Luke	Mom is a stay-at-home mom. Dad is working on a bachelor's degree. Grandma lives with the family	4	1 older brother 1 younger brother	Home School: Follows religious-based curriculum	Likes to dress up in costumes Enjoys animals & cars Imitates older brother
Keith	Sibling of Luke	6	2 younger brothers	Home School: Follows religious-based curriculum	Seems behind other children in academic skills Seeks information

Allen and Richard

Monkey see, monkey do is an appropriate description of these twin boys. Not only do these four year old boys look exactly a like to the point where their teacher can only tell them apart by looking at the color of their shoes, they are interested in similar things. They love everything outdoors. They catch frogs and turtles, venture on their bikes to visit with the neighbors, and magically turn a stick into swords. Couch cushions, milk crates, and old boxes are constantly reinvented, becoming everything from a bubbling lava pit to a stage for a galloping horse show. Their imaginations have free reign within the boundaries of safety. These boys show no interest in learning to write their name or tie their shoes, a concern for both their mother and their classroom teacher. The boys do show concern for one another and are constantly on the lookout for trouble.

On my first observation, they admitted that they were pretending it was night time, as they read books with their mom. The boys and their mother all piled into one bunk bed and read from a collection of books about race cars, silly pets, and trips to space. The collection of books was a combination of the family's personal collection, hand me downs from their two older sisters, and from the library.

Kate

Kate is a three year old little girl, who beats to her own drummer. She does not follow conventions, but instead lets her own little personality lead her. One minute she is a flamenco dancer and the next she is Little Red Riding Hood. She is quick to comment that today's fashion includes her Scottish skirt, dance leotard, and light up high-heel shoes. She has tea parties with her mother and younger brother in which the flavors of the

day include cucumber orange tea with a little bit of salt. She quickly becomes friends with unfamiliar individuals and likes to give directions to younger children.

Her family is quick to follow her lead when it comes to daily life, but her teacher attempts to curtail her creative freedom. At school, a bunny was supposed to be painted with one color of paint, but Kate's bunny was a rainbow of brown, pink, and white. She likes to practice writing her name with magnet letters and stamps, but not with a pencil or pen.

She loves to read stories about girly things. Princess stories are her absolute favorite. She reads books with her mom and young brother at night time and throughout the day as the mood strikers her.

Parker

Parker is a three year old little boy, who is dinosaur obsessed. He can identify all of the dinosaurs with the appropriate name, understands the difference between meat and plant eaters, and watches specific television programs related to this topic. He plays endlessly with the plastic toy representations of these prehistoric creatures. Dinosaurs are serious business as he even has one growing in a tank in his room.

Parker loves going places like the zoo, park, and bookstore with his mother and older brother. His overall personality is serious. He desires knowledge, truth, and information. He is wrestling with the concept of what is real versus what is fake. He enjoys reading both fiction and nonfiction books. His current favorites included the *Planet Earth* books, and a dinosaur alphabet, book. He recently started writing the letters of his name.

Josie and Michael

This sibling pair are opposite in nature but are the best of friends. Josie is a mother in a three year old little girl's body. She takes care of her young brother, her baby dolls, and her peers. She wants you to be quiet when her babies are sleeping, and she changes them when they have an accident. She actively participates in dramatic play, reading books, and drawing pictures of snowmen and spiders. This well mannered little girl talks nonstop at home but is reserved at school.

Michael is Josie's two year old little brother, who idolizes his father. He wants to be outside or in the garage fixing and building things with his dad. His favorite toys include trucks, cars, and tools. He wants to be where the action is and wants to figure out how things work. He is equally vocal and spontaneous at home and school. The two siblings are best friends.

Josie and Michael will spend hours reading books with their family members. Depending on the evening, the nightly reading events may include the entire family of five. Books include Dr. Seuss favorites, My First Phonics Series, and Disney Classics. Their grandmother spends time reading Bible stories to them when they are in her care.

James and Rose

James and Rose are old souls trapped in small bodies. Their knowledge basis, vocabulary, and worldly experiences are beyond their four and two years of life. They articulate their thoughts with the preciseness of a well rehearsed speech. They are serious and silly at the same time, but only when they feel comfortable. They are obsessed with arts and crafts as they are constantly painting, creating items out of clay, and making

birthday cards. They are in love with their dog and are constantly providing others with updates on the dog's recent adventures.

Pre-academic skills and religious teachings are emphasized at home and at school. James and Rose practice their letters, numbers, colors, and writing their names on daily basis. They attend chapel during school hours and church on Sundays in the same building.

Each child has their own set of books in their room. Rose is transitioning from toddler-board books to books with paper pages. She is interested in fairies, princesses, and animals. James loves reading books about tractors and other large pieces of equipment.

Felicity

Felicity is a four year old little girl who is the baby of the family. She was a little slower to develop than her old sister, but since attending school, she has matured. She enjoys playing games, completing puzzles, and reading books. She loves to look at old family pictures reliving various events and holidays.

Religion plays a huge role in Felicity's family's life. Reading the Bible, praying, and singing religious songs are a daily part of this family's devotion to their faith. Her school follows a religious-based curriculum and fosters religious teachings during Jesus time.

Felicity and her family attend the library every week. They check out books, videos, and are regular participants in library's storytime. Felicity selects concept books, princess books, and holiday related stories.

Alex

Alex is a five year old boy, who is competitive with his older brother when it comes to completing puzzles, putting puzzles together, and sporting events. He is learning how to read and is proud of himself when he can apply the appropriate phonics rules. This well mannered, easy going child is finishing pre-k and is anticipating the arrival of kindergarten.

He is interested in dinosaurs, the human body, and how things work. He shares his knowledge about these topics with his peers. He is confident with his current knowledge base, but desires additional information.

Joe

Joe is a two year old little boy, whose life goal is to be in the middle of everything his older siblings are doing. If his siblings are playing Legos, he is playing Legos. If his siblings are learning how to cook dinner, then he is learning to stir. If they are doing school work, then he is working on learning his alphabet and numbers.

This home-schooling family is always on the go. They attend various home school classes, the library, and other community events on a weekly basis. Cultural and religious events are high priority and the home-school curriculum is religious-based.

Luke and Keith

These siblings are quick to entertain anyone who comes to visit them. They want to show off their knowledge, their toys, and even their little brother. They want others, including their grandmother to participate in their learning events at home. They are growing plants in the kitchen, making soap box derby cars in the living room, and

painting pictures in the garage. Superhero costumes, bike helmets, and slippers are common fashions.

This family strongly believes their children will receive a better education at home where the curriculum and interactions with others are controlled and can reflect their religious values.

Kids Day Out Preschool

According to this preschool's website, "Our goal is to help your child experience and learn about God's love and to grow in every area – socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, and intellectually." This preschool serves children from nine months to six years of age. The education levels of the teachers vary from a high school diploma to a bachelor's degree in early childhood. Children attend chapel, Spanish, music, and computer classes on a weekly basis. Allen, Richard, Kate, Parker, Josie and Michael all attend this school.

Little Saints Preschool

Little Saints is a Catholic parochial school whose mission is to promote the growth and development of each student's mind, body and spirit. The school teaches Catholic Christian values and offers a comprehensive curriculum for pre-school through 8th grade. An associate degree in early childhood is the minimum education requirement for the teachers. Children attend chapel, gymnastics, and music on a weekly basis. James and Rose attend this preschool.

Little Lambs Preschool

This preschool's philosophy comes from the Bible verse*"Train up a child in way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it"* Proverbs 22:6. The thematic

curriculum is coupled with academic skills and knowledge. Children participate in Jesus Time on a daily basis. Many of the teachers are mothers or Sunday school teachers but do not have specific educational training or degrees. Alex and Felicity attend this school.

Data Collection Methods

Multiple case study methodology does not dictate specific methods of data collection or analysis as it is designed to capture multiple realities (Hancock et al, 2006; Patton, 2002; Yin, 1989; Yin, 2003). The data collection methods for this multiple case study included semi-structured and informal interviews with parents and teachers, observations of literacy routines at home and at school, field notes, and nonfiction literacy artifacts including lesson plans, calendars, and library receipts, analytic memos, and contextual information (Hays, 2004; Patton, 2002).

Data collection took place from February to May of 2010 (see Table 2). In order to establish rapport with the families, data collection began with home observations. Each family participated in three observations and one interview at home. Children were observed three times at school and their teachers were interviewed one time. Each of these data points provided reveled additional information about how each child experienced and developed nonfiction within the routines of their natural environment. Library observations were completed with three different families which provided additional information about how these families valued nonfiction and incorporated them into their reading routines. Some interviews and observations occurred on the same day depending on the availability of the participants. Field notes were written during the interview and expanded within twenty four hours after the literacy events, the interactions

surrounding these events, and whether not these experiences included nonfiction materials.

Observations.

The literacy routines of young children cannot be completely understood without observing them directly. Observations provide a window to record everyday events, especially interactions as they are being studied to discover the intended meaning of the event to the participants (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, Liao; 2004). The focus of these observations was identifying the specific types of nonfiction literacy routines including the expository language, the type and amount of texts, and the participants in these routines. These observations provided insight into how the social actors negotiated nonfiction in common activities. Each family was observed at home on three different occasions. The number of family members at any particular observation fluctuated with each visit. The children were encouraged to stay in the room and participate in various activities like reading books, putting puzzles together, or playing with play dough but no one was forced to stay. In general, the children were interested in the new person in their house and wanted to demonstrate particular games and activities. Through these observations, I was able to construct knowledge about how these families shaped the nonfiction literacy experiences of these young children.

The observations ranged in length from forty minutes to sixty minutes due to the child's interest and family schedule. The children tended to dictate both the length of the observation and the activities that were included in these observations. The families would encourage the child to engage in certain spontaneous activities and he/she would

either agree or negotiate a different activity. When the children were no longer interested, the home observations were finished.

Table 2

Data Collection

	Allen & Richard	Alex	Felicity	Kate	Parker	Josie Michael	Keith & Luke	Joe	James & Rose
HO #1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
HO #2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
HO #3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
IN # 1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
SO #1	x	x	x	x	x	J-x M-x	x	x	J-x R-x
SO # 2	x	x	x	x	x	J-x M-x			J-x R-x
SO# 3	x	x	x	x	x	J-x M-x			J-x R-x
Te In #1	x	x				J-X M-no			J-x R-no
Library	x		x			x			

HO: Home Observation SO: School Observation
IN: Interview TE In: Teacher Interview

For the first two home observations, families were asked to demonstrate what they considered to be typical literacy activities for their child. Families selected activities like reading books, puzzles and games, and play dough to promote literacy development. The families' personal definition of literacy was defined by the activities they choose. They were not informed that the objective of this study was nonfiction literacy development in fear that they would alter their typical literacy routines to include nonfiction. During these observations, lists of the literacy materials within the home including books, magazines, and games were collected. These observations provided insight into the families' definition of literacy and the routines that promoted or hindered experiences with nonfiction.

On the third home observation, the children were encouraged to choose from a selection of nine nonfiction books and eight fiction books to read. The nonfiction books were selected based upon children's interest, age, and connections to their real life experiences. The fiction books represented an assortment of favorites like Dr. Seuss, Bill Martin and familiar television characters and were selected based upon their popularity with young children. All of the books were laid out on the floor in front of the children and they selected the books that they wanted to read. One family decided not to participate in reading the books and continued with their own literacy events. The mothers read the books to their children for as long as they appeared to be interested. Information about the child's individual interests and preferences for a specific genre was identified through this observation.

During the observations and interviews, the families mentioned that they routinely visit the library to either get books and videos or to attend library sponsored events. This reoccurring information sparked a desire to observe these outings. Three families comprising of five children agreed to participate in a library observation. The library visits ranged in length from forty-five minutes to one hour depending on the interest and the behavior of the young children. During these visits, children selected both books to read at the library and books to check out. These observations provided information about the role the public library played in the sponsorship of nonfiction literacy. Lists of the books read and checked out were recorded and analyzed.

All thirteen children were observed participating in the literacy routines of their educational settings. Observations were scheduled around recess, lunch time, nap, and

special activities. Literacy learning in these setting occurred in segmented bits of time, so observations varied in length from 38 minutes to 75 minutes.

Interviews.

I conducted both semi-structured and informal interviews with all the participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all of the mothers and five of the classroom teachers. Informal interviews occurred spontaneously during home and school observations as parents and teachers provided extra information about the child's interests, personality, and rituals.

Interviews are a special conversation between the researcher and the participant where the participant commands the role of expert (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, Liao, 2004; Patton 2002). Interviews are a rich source of data because they provide an opportunity to gain insight into the sponsors' views of children's nonfiction literacy development at home and school (Hays, 2004). Interview questions focused on the literacy routines that the adults participated in with their children, the role of nonfiction texts in the families' literacy diets, and the outside forces that influence a child's nonfiction literacy development (see Appendix A for interview protocol). These interviews were semi-structured to maintain some standardization, tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim (Patton, 2002, Strauss & Corbin 1998). Interviews were not conducted with the children directly.

The interviews with the mothers were scheduled after the second home observation and ranged in length from 42 minutes to 60 minutes. All of the children were home during the interviews which sometimes caused distraction and disjointed answers to the questions. The mothers expressed their desire to answer the questions thoroughly

and became more comfortable as the interview continued. The fathers did not participate in the interviews because they were typically at work during that time.

A similar type of interview was conducted with five classroom teachers to determine how the nonfiction literacy routines of the classroom differ from the ones at home. (see Appendix B for teacher interview guide) The interviews ranged in length from 40 minutes to 75 minutes. Children were not present during these interviews. The teachers were free to share information about their classroom literacy events. All of the teachers were asked to participate in the interview portion, but three teachers declined.

Informal interviews were conducted with the families and teachers during observations in which they provided insights into the child's personality, current interests and family activities. The young children would also offer information about current events, family relationships and personal desires. Information obtained during these informal interviews was added to the observational field notes. The interviews provided insider information about how young children are exposed and engaged with nonfiction literacy.

Artifacts.

Various artifacts were collected from both the families and the schools and analyzed to support the emerging findings from other sources of data. The information within the artifacts served to triangulate the data and strengthen the validity of the findings. One source of artifact data was the lists of books families provided that documented what they read with their child over a week's period of time. These lists were used to analyze the types of the literature that was a part of their daily routines. In addition, families provided library receipts of the recent books and videos that were

checked out during their last trip to the library. Samples of the children's art work with a dictated description of their drawings were also collected to determine the types of writing they were creating. These artifacts provided additional insight into the literacy routines and events of the children.

Published school curricula artifacts were collected from the private school participants but no artifacts were obtained from the home school families. One family stated they had a book with a year's worth of curriculum but could not find it during the data collection. The private schools offered handbooks, monthly lesson plans, classroom newsletters, classroom schedules, lists of books read in the class, and weekly theme/units. These items contributed to the overall picture of literacy learning within these classroom settings. The literacy events, including the types of materials used and the frequency and duration of the activities, were compared across classroom settings.

Data Analysis

Case study data analysis methods are determined by the researcher and by the research questions and methods (Bassey, 1999; Merriam, 1998). One of the methods utilized to analyze this data was the constant comparative method that emerged from the work of grounded theorists Glasser and Straus (1967). The constant comparative method follows a specific set of inductive strategies that transforms data into synthesized categories of information to create patterns or themes (Chamaz, 2004; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These procedures include specific processes for data analysis and conceptualizing the data (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao, 2004). According to Chamaz (2004), data analysis begins with "with individual cases, incidents or experiences and develops progressively more abstract conceptual categories to synthesize, to explain, and to

understand your data and to identify patterned relationships within it" (p. 497). By using this data analysis method, each individual case could be analyzed separately and then compared to each other to create a greater understanding of how young children develop and experience nonfiction. Data collection and data analysis phases were conducted simultaneously with the emerging themes influencing the analytical process (Chamaz, 2004; Strauss & Corbin; 1990). See Table 3 for the data analysis process.

Table 3

Data Analysis Process

Phase	Description of the process
1. Becoming familiar with the data	Transcribing data, reading, and re-reading the data
2. Constant Comparative Method (Glasser & Straus, 1967)	Line by line open coding, comparing one data chunk to another to develop initial codes, axial codes, & creation of categories
3. Analytic Memos	Statements designed to reflect and think about what the data is saying
4. Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)	Searching for themes or patterns within and between data sets. Name, review, and define themes to tell the overall story of the data

The first step in the constant comparative method required each data piece to be coded line by line into as many categories as possible (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This analytical technique is also referred to as opening coding, where concepts and analytical insights are determined by the researcher through close examination of and reflection on the data (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Glaser &Strauss, 1967). Open coding involves both inductive and deductive processes to "break down, examine, compare, conceptualize and categorize the data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Through this analysis, patterns within texts emerge with careful effort by the researcher to avoid preconceived ideas of what is

important or relevant to answering the research questions (Chamaz, 2004; Glaser & Strauss 1967; Patton, 2002). Inductive analysis involves discovering relationships among data units including semantic, spatial, cause-effect, function, and sequence relationships (Hatch, 2002).

Units of data were given a label based upon my interpretation of what the data was saying. Labels or codes were not forced upon the data but determined by the actual data. Each successive segment of data was compared to the first piece of data to see if it was similar enough to be given the same label or if it was different and required a new label (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The first emerging labels included *religious information, nonfiction materials, reading routines, parental beliefs* and *the library* which provided early information about how these young children were learning nonfiction literacy. This process was completed for every interview, observation and artifact.

After open coding was complete, axial coding was used to analyze the data for specific umbrella categories. Focused or axial coding is "a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 96). A new analytic lens is used to re-examine earlier data for meanings and generating categories (Chamaz, 2004).

Similarly labeled segments of the same phenomena were integrated into analytical categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Classification occurred when concepts were compared against one another and appeared to pertain to similar phenomenon; those concepts or data units were then grouped together under a higher order, more abstract concept called a category (Chamaz, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1990)

Once categories were developed, individual units of data were no longer compared to one another, but instead the properties of the categories were compared to one another (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The properties and dimensions of a category were viewed on a continuum of the conditions in which nonfiction literacy learning is pronounced or minimized (Chamaz, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Categories that emerged from the data included *experiences, exposure, sources of information*, and *literate parental and educational figures.*

The constant comparative method of analysis requires simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis phases (Chamaz, 2004). The results of the open and axial coding processes influenced my subsequent data collection processes (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao, 2004). For example, the recurrence of the label *library* forced me to explore the library as a sponsor of young children's nonfiction literacy development. At the onset of data collection, I had not intended to visit the library with these families but through the process of open coding, I found it necessary. *Religion* was another label that appeared numerous times within the process of open and axial coding. The reoccurrence of this label influenced observations of religious learning times at school. *Religion* was not a topic that was initially considered as phenomena that needed to be explored. In these ways, the processes of data collection and data analysis were intertwined and influenced each other.

Analytic memos were written during the coding process as means to reflect and think about what was happening in the data (Chamaz, 2004). These statements helped to elaborate assumptions, actions, and contradictions within particular codes (Emerson,

Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Codes became active as ideas were questioned, clarified, and compared within the data (Chamaz, 2006). Analytic memos included statements about the types of experiences that were available for the young children and how nonfiction did not seem to appear in the traditional book format.

Thematic Analysis.

Thematic analysis is process of identifying themes or patterns both within and across the data sets (Braun & Clark, 2006). Themes capture the overall story of the research by describing, organizing, and interrupting the data (Braun & Clark, 2006; Boyatzis 1998)**.** Themes are identified through inductive and deductive processes (Braun & Clark, 2006; Patton, 2002) and on the semantic and latent levels (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clark, 2006). Identification of themes through the semantic level requires direct observation of theme within the data sets, where as identification at the latent level emphasizes the "underlying ideas, assumptions, conceptualizations, and ideologies" (Braun & Clark, 2006). Latent analysis goes beyond the explicit data and focuses on the interpretation of the data in the creation of themes. Thematic analysis is a multi-step process where the researcher is flexible and reflexive in generating, naming, and reviewing the themes (Braun & Clark, 2006).

Thematic analysis allowed the story of nonfiction sponsorship to emerge in the context of routines and experiences across natural environments. Semantic level analysis identified specific people as sponsors of nonfiction development. Through latent analysis, the role of sponsorship was developed more completely to understand how sponsorship may positively or negatively shape the nonfiction literacy routines and experiences of

young children. The concept of sponsorship was defined through the analysis of the complete data set.

The constant comparative and thematic analysis methods were complementary to one other in determining how sponsors shaped the nonfiction literacy experiences of these young children. Through the constant comparative analysis method, data was organized into numerous categories. These categories were like individual pieces in a complete puzzle and outline the bigger picture. Individually, they provided some insight into the nonfiction literacy experiences of these young children, but did tell the whole story. Through thematic analysis, individual categories were woven together to complete the puzzle. Multiple categories were combined into two over arching themes that exposed how sponsors shape the nonfiction literacy experiences and routines of young children. The constant comparative and thematic analysis methods provided two ways to re-examine the data as a means to see something new.

Two major themes emerged from the data:1) The sponsors of nonfiction literacy included people (parents, teachers, the child, siblings and grandparents), the variety of places (school, community, and the library) they designed and maintained and their personal practices (religious views, family values and practices) that both positively and negatively shaped early nonfiction literacy experiences. 2) Young children's informational speech genres follow the text structures of nonfiction literature and serve as an emergent form of expository text. Art, dramatic play and games and puzzles were alternative spaces that opened the door for the creation of alternative texts, namely informational speech. These two themes provide answers to the research questions and will be explored in detail in the next two chapters.

Limitations

Some of the limitations of this study were a result of the overall research design. Ideally, I would have observed full days or weeks of a child's life to capture all of the possible literacy routines, but due to time constraints, participant and researcher availability, and practicality, I only observed short segments of the nonfiction literacy routines. The observations were a snapshot of how these young children experience nonfiction throughout their day and information may be missing. The family interviews were conducted with only the mothers, and it would have been useful to obtain the father's perspective of the child's literacy development. In addition, some of the teachers choose not to participate in the interview portion. The teachers who opted-out might have added an alternative view to nonfiction literacy development. Despite these limitations in data collection, the data set was rich and full enough to provide important insights into the questions at hand.

Conclusion

In order to understand how young children develop nonfiction genre knowledge, I examined both the literacy routines and the sponsors that fostered this knowledge. By using multiple case study methodology with constant comparative and thematic analysis methods, I identified the specific nonfiction literacy routines including the type of language, type of texts, the participants, and social context in which young children come to understand nonfiction. Observations of the literacy events at home and at school served as primary data for answering the research questions related the children's experiences and routines with nonfiction. Interviews and observations assisted in defining the role of literacy sponsor and how they shaped nonfiction literacy experiences for the participants.

CHAPTER IV

The Sponsorship of Nonfiction Literacy Development

Literacy sponsors are any individual, group, or organization that fosters or hinders another individual's literacy (Brandt, 1995). Sponsors can also create places and spaces that influence children's literacy development. For example spaces include book shelves in the child's room or house and places like the library and the zoo.

The children were curious about the world around them. They wanted to know the names of objects, how things work, and why things are done in a certain way. They were "little sponges" ready to soak up the world around them. In order to fill their desire for information, literacy sponsors encouraged different nonfiction literacy events. The literacy sponsors for the young children included people: their parents, siblings, grandparents, teachers, and the child themselves. Sharing books, playing with toys, practicing one's name, and going on field trips were some of the ways children were encouraged to experience their world. Culturally, these sponsors valued education and wanted these children to have every advantage possible for entering formal schooling. The sponsors did not limit literacy learning to home as they promoted literacy by taking their children to places like school, the community, and the library. Personal beliefs and practices also shaped the nonfiction experiences of young children. These sponsors strongly believed that religious and Bible stories were examples of nonfiction in the child's life. Literacy learning occurred in varied routines like reading books, completing art projects, dramatic play scenarios, and attending community events, that reflected the cultural and educational beliefs of the sponsors. The data revealed several sponsors of nonfiction literacy development for the participants, including a few surprising sponsors.

- Mothers and teachers were the most prominent sponsors of these children's nonfiction literacy development, in both positive and negative ways.
    - Mothers' and teachers' genre preferences influenced children's nonfiction opportunities and experiences, often limiting their exposure to nonfiction.
    - Mothers and teachers limited young children's interaction with nonfiction books. Home and school reading routines were dominated by fiction, although boys more frequently accessed nonfiction.
    - Mothers and teachers' view of emergent literacy focused on reading development. Emergent nonfiction writing was limited, if not absent, in the design of literacy events by the parents and teachers.
- Due to the thematic nature of the preschool curriculum, school teachers were stronger sponsors of nonfiction literacy than other adults in the children's lives.
- Mothers, teachers, grandparents and siblings were positive sponsors of nonfiction literacy development when they served as informational resources for the young children.
- Although religious stories are not typically considered nonfiction (e.g. by children's literature experts), parents and teacher used Bible stories as a type of nonfiction, as "true" texts that informed the children about their religion and the world through their religious lens.
- The public library system may hinder children's interest and access to nonfiction literature.
- The participant children's personal interests influenced their own nonfiction literacy experiences and development.

Each of these themes of sponsorship will be discussed more fully in this chapter.

At Home: Literacy Sponsors, Routines and Experiences

Literacy development began at home. In this study, a child's family was a significant sponsor of nonfiction literacy development. As sponsors, the parents, grandparents, and siblings both promoted and hindered nonfiction literacy development.

Nonfiction literacy development was promoted during real life experiences, interactions with informational materials and engagement with religious practices and beliefs. Literacy sponsors also hindered nonfiction literacy development through the over-selection of fiction materials and the limited exposure to nonfiction literature.

Before there can be discussion of the role of nonfiction in the lives of young children, there must be a discussion of the genres in question, nonfiction and fiction. Fiction and nonfiction are two different genres of literature. Fiction books are typically written in a narrative format incorporating the features of setting, plot, characters, and theme to tell a story. The characters and events of the story are invented or imagined by the author. Real events maybe depicted, but are fantasized in some way. Nonfiction books provide facts and information about real events, people, and places. Information may be organized in several different ways and displayed in photographs, charts, and diagrams. The two genres serve very different purposes as one is to tell a narrative for entertainment and the other is provide and explain information.

Mothers

Mothers were a major sponsor of how children learned and experienced nonfiction since they were one of the child's first teachers. Some mothers felt it was their job to teach their children about the world around them by encouraging them to participate in unique experiences. When asked about her role as a parent, Kate's mother was quoted as saying "My job is to teach them everything." Josie and Michael's mother commented that everyone in the family was responsible for helping them learn: "We all participate. We all read to them. We ask and answer their questions. We all engage them in interacting with their TV shows. We all play outside with them. We all do an even

part. We take active roles in teaching them and reading to them." James and Rose's mother believed the following: "I am certainly the one putting the subjects in front of them. I am the one that is finding the things that they are interested in. I am the one putting all the literacy stuff in front of them." The children's experiences with the world were directly related to what the parents desired to teach and how they wanted to prepare them for the future. Mothers were a primary sponsor in children's literacy learning because they facilitated opportunities to experience the world.

The young children's literacy experiences were often centered on topics they were interested in but were expanded by opportunities provided by their mothers. Allen and Richard's mother's views of their learning captured the general beliefs of the participants:

> I look for patterns in what they are interested in. If they gravitate toward something and what is it about that that is interesting to them. I try to give them opportunities to explore it, whether it is books or the item themselves. The boys love cars so they have a lot of match box cars. I try to extend that. You have track pieces what can you do with those? What can you build with your blocks for your cars? I want to figure out what about the things are interesting because sometimes what I think the interest is, I am off a little bit. I try to watch what they gravitate to and provide opportunities for them to explore it.

The mothers supported their children's literacy learning through routines like shared book reading, open dialogue about topics of interest, and using the child's interests as a springboard for exploration. These routines provided information and knowledge regarding interest specific topics and therefore lay the foundation for future nonfiction literacy development.

Learning at Home

Mothers sought opportunities that prepared their children for formal schooling and academic success. Felicity's mother summed up the thoughts of the participants,

> The games from an early age were educational. I mean when we had her and she started talking so well we encouraged that and fostered that. We always read to her. I don't at all think that because they go to school, it is the teacher's job you know. I know they are going to learn the most with us and us taking the time. When we first talked about having kids and so we talked about wanting to start early and preparing them for college and at the same time we want them to be kids and play. We both take very active roles in teaching them and reading to them.

Teachable moments were endless, spontaneous, and fun. Josie and Michael's mother stated, "I integrate literacy into all activities, and we don't have a set time to do it." Literacy learning was observed at every family visit regardless of the activity of choice. Activities including games, puzzles, books, and dramatic play emphasized emergent literacy concepts like the letters and the sounds of the alphabet, numbers and colors during these routines. These academic concepts are informational in nature but were not defined in that manner by the literacy sponsors. Literacy sponsors defined these routines in terms of pre-academic skills, entertainment, and educational value. In this way, informational learning was often tacit and implicitly embedded in play activities.

During one home observation, James and Rose were encouraged to play the "letter mailbox" game. Each mailbox had a letter of the alphabet painted on it and the children delivered picture cards beginning with that letter to the mailbox. Then their mom reviewed each of the cards with the children. The following exchange between James, Rose and their mother occurred while playing the letter game.

> James & Rose's Mom: What letter is this?
> James & Rose: B
> James & Rose's Mom: What sound does it make?
> Rose: I don't know
> James & Rose's Mom: /buh/ like blue

Every family was observed in at least one context where the alphabetic principle was taught as a precursor to literacy development. Identifying colors and counting were two additional skills that parents spent a large amount of time teaching their children. During the first home observation, Josie and Michael were observed playing a home version of bowling where they demonstrated their knowledge of colors and numbers while setting up each of the pins. The observed dialogue was as follows:

> Josie: 1,2,3, 4
> Michael: 5, 10, 2, 7
> Josie: blue, green, orange
> Michael: purple, red, yellow
> Mom: Who can say it in Spanish?
> Josie : uno, dos, tres, quatro, cinco

Mothers sponsored events related to academic skills because they were considered to be foundational for kindergarten readiness, and not because they were informational texts.

Modeling Reading

Sponsorship was directly related to what mothers deemed important, literacy. Mothers engaged in literacy-centered activities for their occupations, social commitments, household maintenance, and entertainment on a daily basis. The expectation was that their children would learn and develop similar literacy skills; therefore literacy behaviors were modeled regularly. The amount and type of literacy events were similar from family to family, but there were differences between mothers and fathers (as reported by the mothers). Table 4 outlines the types of literacy events in which the children's parents regularly engaged and highlights the different genre preferences. A child's experience with nonfiction literacy was varied based upon the particular sponsor's view and understanding of the genre. The experience could be

slanted either positively or negatively depending upon the sponsor's own experiences with nonfiction.

Mothers.

In this study, the mothers typically read fiction books for fun and nonfiction books for occupational and household needs. The mothers selected fiction for themselves and nonfiction was referenced out of necessity. All of the mothers described themselves as readers of fiction. They were quick to discuss popular titles like *Twlight, Harry Potter,* and *Lovely Bones.* Parker's mom said, "I read what is called 'Chick's lit'-books about girls by girls." Alex's mom echoed the previous sentiment, "I am not much of a nonfiction reader. I think there is better [nonfiction] stuff out there and I should read it. I tend to read more fiction myself." Even though this mother was aware of quality nonfiction texts, she was not interested in reading it. Many of the mothers said reading fiction provided an escape from the everyday world. According to these mothers, reading for enjoyment meant reading fiction. Mothers did not read nonfiction for enjoyment and they did not promote nonfiction texts to their young children. This bias towards fiction poses a potential problem if mothers unconsciously limit their child's experiences with nonfiction texts because they do not enjoy that genre.

Mothers only admitted to reading nonfiction when asked directly about the role of nonfiction in their lives. Fiction texts were the more obvious answers as this was the preferred genre. Regarding the reading of nonfiction, Rose and James' mother commented, "I have gotten into some sort of self-help kick. I am reading more self help books to become a more grateful person." Luke and Keith's mother read to gain information and confirmation about her home schooling practices,

> I read mostly online, self help and home school mommy kind of stuff. I am not the only one that struggles with keeping the house clean. I have learned that about other women on line. I am not alone in the world.

For the participant mothers, the purpose of nonfiction texts was not entertainment, but to serve as a reference to understand the world. All nine of the mothers preferred to read fiction as leisure reading, but six of mothers said they consulted nonfiction when needed

Fathers.

Fathers read for different purposes than mothers. Fathers mainly engaged with nonfiction texts. Due to conflicting work schedules, the fathers were not interviewed directly about their literacy practices and preferences. Information gathered about the fathers' literacy practices were illuminated through their spouse's perspective. According to the mothers, the fathers read the same genre of materials for enjoyment as they did for occupational purposes. Nonfiction texts dominated the literacy experiences for the fathers. Parker's mother stated her husband "reads mostly for news." Kate's mother reported that her husband reads, "Everything that has to do with sports, especially hockey. He's a nerd. He reads PC gamer. He is big into computers, and he will build computers. He will read medical stuff because he is a pharmacist, and he has to do continuing ed stuff." Some of the fathers subscribed to interest specific magazines and read the newspaper for current events. Josie and Michael's mother stated that the father, "likes to do wood work. He likes do things with his hands. Sometimes he will pick up a wood working magazine." A limited number of the fathers regularly participated in social networking sites and some accessed interest specific websites. Kate's mother reported that her husband, "It is a big Formula One fan and he reads a lot about that online. He

does most of his reading online." Fathers were reading nonfiction to meet their interests both professionally and personally. Nonfiction seemed to dominate the literacy choices of fathers as they did not appear to read fiction either at home or at work.

Table 4

Parents as Literacy Models

Child	Mother as a Reader	Mother as a Writer	Father as a Reader	Father as a Writer
Allen & Richard	Classics New Releases	E-mails	Nonfiction	N/A
Kate	Girly Fiction for fun Nonfiction for occupation & household needs	Emails Social Networks Secretary for Community Organization	Nonfiction	Occupation Only
Parker	Girly fiction for fun Best Sellers Favorite authors Magazines	E-mails Social networking Lists	Nonfiction information about sports and money management	Occupation only
Josie & Michael	Classics Best sellers All fiction	E-mails Social networking Occupations – Patient charting	Woodworking manuals & magazines	Occupation only
Alex	Fiction Blogs Food labels Bible	E-mails Social networking Lists Curriculum Budget	N/A	N/A
Felicity	Christian fiction Bible	E-mails Social networking	Christian Nonfiction	Occupation only
Rose & James	Self help Religious Home school Blogs	E-mails Social networking Gratitude journal	Newspaper Hobby magazines Online	N/A
Joe	Bible Home school curriculum	Lesson plans E-mails Budget	School assignments	School assignments
Luke & Keith	Home school	Lesson plans	School	School

The Internet as Nonfiction Text

Mothers accessed technology to find answers to questions. Parker's mother commented, "If they have questions about how or why we have clouds, then we Google

it." It is impossible to know all the answers to all of the why questions that the children asked; therefore, parents accessed information through technology. Google has become such a quick reference to find answers to life's questions that parents relied on it instead of traditional reference materials. Josie's mother said they accessed technology to find answers to developmental issues: "We looked up potty training. We did a lot of looking, trying to find resources to help her." Josie's parents' implemented various tips and suggestions they found online to help Josie through this developmental process. Mothers modeled how to use technology to find answers and children learned that Internet was a source of information. When the mothers accessed these alternative sources of information, the children observed different nonfiction media. They were exposed to the concept that new information can be obtained from a variety of sources including books, people, and technology-based resources and then incorporated into what they already knew to create new knowledge. Mothers accessed the internet to seek new information.

Literacy events related to reading were modeled by both parents, but the genre preferences were different for mothers and fathers. The individual preferences for one genre or the other was emphasized in the materials bought and read to the children.

Availability of Fiction Versus Nonfiction Books in the Children's Homes

Even though both parents were actively involved in both modeling and facilitating their child's literacy development, the mothers were responsible for the literacy materials in the home. A combination of the mother's background, education, and personal interests influenced the materials they selected for their children. These materials mirrored their own choices of literature. They bought fiction materials, especially books, for their children to read as enjoyment and sought out nonfiction materials to meet their

child's curiosities. Books were purchased from bookstores, Scholastic book orders, and book fairs. Even when extended family members purchased books they tended to be fictional. According to James and Rose's mother, "My sister always buys them books for birthdays and Christmas. She doesn't buy her nieces and nephews toys. She got Rose *Pinkalicious* and *Purpleicious* and we have been reading those for awhile." There was no mention that the fathers directly purchased any of the literacy items. Both parents participated in the daily literacy activities with their children but the mothers facilitated the literacy routines. We assume since they prefer fiction, fiction materials dominated the home libraries. Table 5 illustrates the genres of the children's books read to the children at various times. Fiction books dominated all areas.

Each family had a variety of books throughout the house that the young children could choose. Josie and Michael's mother commented that, "We have a book on being afraid. We read that a lot because Michael still likes his nightlight." This realistic fiction used a narrative format to explain how to overcome fears. Luke and Keith's family also used realistic fiction to help the boys understand various social concepts. Luke and Keith's mother said, "We have a lot of social books that may use a story but are about sharing, or going to the dentist." All of the families said their libraries contained fiction books; very few mentioned nonfiction books.

Table 5

Genre Variety of Books Read at Home

Name	Child's Books	Books read during observation	Books read over a week	Library books @ library
Allen & Richard	21 fiction 4nonfiction 1 Bible	1 concept book 10 fiction	14 fiction 7 non fiction 1 non fiction video	15 fiction- on display 7 fiction 5 nonfiction
Kate	22 fiction 0 nonfiction	1 fiction	20 fiction	Visits the library
Parker	45 fiction 7 nonfiction 3 Bible	7 fiction 3 nonfiction	12 fiction 0 nonfiction	Visits the library & bookstores
Josie	4 concept 30 fiction 3 nonfiction 4 Bible	3 fiction	22 fiction 3 nonfiction Highlights	12 fiction 6 Nonfiction
Michael		3 fiction	22 fiction 3 nonfiction Highlights	12 fiction 0 nonfiction
Rose & James	8 fiction 1 nonfiction	Letter game Computer	16 fiction 6 nonfiction	Library-order on line
Felicity	9 fiction 2 nonfiction	1 fiction	14 fiction 2 nonfiction 15 Bible stories	3 read by librarian fiction Check out 8 fiction Attends Story time
Alex	16 fiction 1 Bible	1 fiction		Occasional library-summer
Joe	8 fiction 14 nonfiction 2 Bible	4 fiction 1 concept Flashcards	6 fiction 2 nonfiction Bible stories	Attends the Library
Luke & Keith	10 fiction 3 nonfiction	3 fiction Finger plays	12 fiction 10 nonfiction	Attends the library

The participants' books covered a spectrum of topics including animals, concept books, dinosaurs, fairy tales, and real life situations that met the interests of both the parents and the child. Felicity's mother reported that her girls "do like fantasy and fairytales." Kate's mother echoed these statements about her daughter's interests, "She is into fantasy. She loves fairies, castles and princesses. She is 100% girl. She is just like me." The girls were identified as preferring fiction, just like their mothers. It was

reported that boys were interested in both nonfiction and fiction books. Parker's mother reported her son was "really into the dinosaur books. He loves them even if they say the same thing. They really like the Planet Earth books." James's mother was quick to say, "I know he wants us to read from the John Deere tractor book every night but I get tired of it." James was really interested in the nonfiction book about tractors, where as his mother lost interested in this book because it was too informational for her preferences. The cultural norms of these families may have played a role in determining that nonfiction is more for boys than girls. Table 5 highlights the genre of children's books read to the participants on a regular basis. Fiction books dominated all reading events which, again, spoke to the lack of exposure young children have to nonfiction books.

Families had almost three times as many fiction books at home as they did nonfiction. In observation after observation, families and children overwhelmingly selected fiction books to read. Alex's mother commented on the genre of the boys' books:

> Oh. I would say fiction, for sure. The nonfiction is coming into play. More science. Alex's older brother is doing more at school and just as they are getting curious about that stuff. Most of our books are fiction. Just children's literature books.

Both boys and girls selected fiction books from their own collections to read during observations. Nonfiction books were selected in limited amounts about specific topics. One nonfiction book was read for every four fiction books read.

When nonfiction books were selected, it was mainly boys who were interested in this genre. As a whole, young girls were less likely to read nonfiction outside of photo albums or "*My First 100 Word" books*. Popular nonfiction books were related to topics

like dinosaurs, race cars, and other types of transportation. These topics lent themselves to nonfiction particularly since the young children wanted to know the real names and see real pictures of items in which they were interested. Alex's mother commented, "They have recently gotten into body parts and functions, which has been interesting. We got a book, you know one of those *Usborne* books with the flaps, it explains further and has pictures. They really like that."

It was difficult to tease out whether the gender difference in selecting nonfiction texts was related to the children's interests or if families did not see nonfiction as an enjoyable genre for their young girls. Since mothers enjoyed fiction books for themselves, they might not have considered selecting nonfiction for their young girls. When asked about nonfiction for their young children, the mothers of girls commented about magazines or reference materials like dictionaries but there was no mention of traditional books. Mothers of boys were quicker to offer different examples of nonfiction due to the personal interests and desires of their children. Boys were curious about how and why things work, the human body, transportation, and dinosaurs. Their desire for information about these topics could not be fulfilled through fiction. Literacy diets of boys included more nonfiction than those of girls, but still fiction dominated the home libraries of both genders.

Parker was one child who was extremely interested in books about dinosaurs. On various occasions, he was observed reading from a nonfiction text about dinosaurs. Parker went through each page naming each of the dinosaurs with their correct names. He would add information about the number of horns, the type of claws, and whether or not they were a plant or meat eater.

> Parker: “What is this called? Baryonox. Like to eat little dinosaurs. We are just looking at the mean ones. Here is a mean one. Stenoychasaurs-trudon.

By interacting with nonfiction texts with an interested adult, Parker obtained information related to a subject of interest. He learned the difference between plant eaters and meat eaters and was able to identify different species based upon its characteristics. This information may not have been portrayed in the same manner in a fictional book.

Allen and Richard were also big fans of nonfiction text. On numerous occasions, their mother commented how the boys sought out informational texts.

> Nonfiction is what the boys will read to themselves because they can at least see the pictures. They will pick out books where the texts are too difficult for them but they can see the pictures. Especially the books about cares will have pictures of the parts of the cars taken apart so they can get a sense of how the whole thing works. Nonfiction is easier to edit if it is above their level. You can pick two or three sentences off a page and they can get the gist of it.

Nonfiction texts fulfilled the boys’ desires for knowledge about how cars work. Fiction books did not highlight this information in a manner that satisfied the boys’ curiosities. The gender differences in genre selection appeared to mirror the parents’ genre preferences. Parental bias may be a significant negative sponsor in the general availability of nonfiction books in the home and in the provision of nonfiction books for girls, but mothers tended to facilitate access to nonfiction for boys that had relevant interests

During the third home observation, the participant children were given the opportunity to select books from a collection of fiction and nonfiction texts, and fiction dominated their choices (see Table 6). The boys were twice as likely to choose nonfiction

texts as the girls were. When the girls selected the nonfiction, they frequently reported that they were not interested in these books and wanted to move on to a different text, a fictional text. While reading *Owen & Mazee*, Felicity said, "I don't like this book. I just want to look at the pictures." Familiarity with fiction texts may be a reason why young children gravitated towards fictional texts more than nonfiction books. The children were interested in the nonfiction books when the topic directly related to their own curiosities about the world. Biographical books about real life zoo animals were the most popular nonfiction with these children, followed by a book about swimming; two activities that all the children had participated in previously. When given the opportunity, some of the children did choose to interact with nonfiction books.

The Unidentified Nonfiction Texts

Children were exposed to informational texts, such as magazines, toy instruction booklets, and catalogs that weren't readily identified as nonfiction texts by the parents. The parents mentioned these materials as "other things" they read to their children. The children also had subscriptions to magazines like *Highlights* and *National Geographic*. Families subscribed to these magazines as a way to expand upon their child's interests. Alex's mother reported that her boys "get magazines. They used to get Highlights and Nick Jr. I just ordered *National Geographic for Kids*." Luke and Keith's mother subscribes to "*Highlights, Zoo Magazine,* and *Cub Scouts*" for her boys. James's mother reported that he "likes to look through the toy catalogs. If there is a piece of lawn equipment or something with a motor on the back page of the newspaper he wants to see it." During observations both Alex and Parker referenced their Lego instruction manual to make a specific design. Felicity spent time reviewing her valentine cards from her

classmates during one observation. Children engaged with nonfiction materials even though families did not explicitly identify them as nonfiction texts.

Table 6

Children's Genre Selections when Given a Choice

Nonfiction	Children	Fiction	Children
Actual Size	1 girl 1 boy	*Another Monster at the End of This Book*	2 girls 1 boy
An Egg is Quiet	1 girl 2 boys	*Caps For Sale*	0 girls 4 boys
Diggers and Dumpers	0 girls 2 boys	*The Foot Book*	2 girls 3 boys
Knut	2 girls 5 boys	*I'll Teach My Dog 100 Words*	2 girls 1 boy
Let's Talk Swimming	1 girl 4 boys	The Poky Little Puppy	0 girls 2 boys
Life Cycles: Pumpkins	1 girl 3 boys	*The Secret Birthday Message*	0 children
Owen & Mzee:	1 girl 6 boys	*When I Was Little: A Four Year*	3 girls 0 boys
Rainy Weather Days	0 children	*Polar Bear, Polar Bear,*	1 girl 5 boys

Even though families did not consider these materials to be "reading materials", the children interacted with these texts in the same dialogical pattern used with their fictional books. Children were exposed to nonfiction through interactions with these additional texts. Nonfiction books were read at home; just not the same amount or frequency as fiction. The type and amount of nonfiction resembles the genre preferences of the mothers; therefore fiction is the dominant choice. Their limited opportunities to engage with these types of texts may impede their nonfiction literacy development.

Modeling Writing

Unlike reading, parental writing activities were related primarily to nonfiction purposes. Writing activities were viewed as a tool to maintain household and occupational needs, and to communicate with others. Luke and Keith's mother said she made lists to keep track of items the family needed for meals, arts and crafts, and school projects. "Grocery lists. Lists of stuff that I want. I will write it down." A couple of the mothers participated in literacy activities for the organizations in which they held leadership positions. Josie and Michael's mother reported she engaged in a writing related to her role as president of the parents group. "I am president of the parents association for their school, so I type up memos and agendas, minutes, and newsletters". A majority of writing occurred through technology. Mothers accessed online social networking sites, emails, and text messages to communicate with others. They sought websites, especially Google to research desired information. Financial records and budgets were kept and maintained online. The majority of household writing was completed by the mothers.

In the mothers' eyes, fathers generally did not do a lot of writing but when they did engage in these activities it was for occupational or educational purposes. Kate's mother reported that her husband wrote a computer program for his job to assist with medicinal dosing issues. Joe's mother said that her husband wrote "term papers for school but does not do other writing than that." The mothers had a hard time coming up with examples of when their husbands participated in writing tasks. Mothers modeled written language tasks more than fathers, which might indicate gender differences in the purposes that writing serves within a household and family.

Children Writing At Home

Children were encouraged to write at home under specific conditions. Writing materials were typically kept in a cabinet and required permission and supervision. Even though writing was an encouraged activity, sponsors hindered children's access to this literacy event by keeping materials out of reach. Reading was seen as an open ended activity in which children participated at will, where as writing was only permissible during supervised moments of time. Even though reading and writing are two essential components to emergent literacy, some families did not promote equal opportunities to engage in these literacy activities. Reading activities were privileged over writing.

Writing for young children was considered to be a developmental process that in the parents' eyes did not begin until the child could write his or her name. Children practiced writing their name with crayons, makers, paints, stamps, and coloring books. Parents constantly practiced writing the children's name with them. Parker's mother said,

> Parker doesn't really write. He just scribbles and draws. He will tell you he is making a picture of a dinosaur but it doesn't look like one. He did P-A-R-K the other day on his paper but the letters were here and there all over the paper.

Felicity's mother echoed this statement with the comment "I will have Felicity start working on it, she can trace her shapes. We are just starting to work on writing her name. She doesn't have it under control yet." The ability to write one's name defined the onset of writing ability.

Even though parents did not see the early attempts of scribbling and drawing as writing, the children were imitating their parents. James's mother reported that James will "pretend to make a grocery list, draw a scribbling line and call it 'waffles.' James was

making lists in the same way he has seen his mother write lists for the grocery store. He was imitating informational writing. Besides a child's name, there was limited mention of informational writing. When the children were asked to draw pictures, they drew pictures of real things like race car tracks, snowmen, and eggs. The children were quick to orally label their picture and its components. Luke was drawing a picture of his dad, brother and himself and said the following comments:

> It is my dad. I am going to make me and Keith. This is my machine my dad is working on. It is red and yellow buttons. My dad has spikey hair. I need the orange. Keith is wearing orange. It is hot. When the sun is on me.

Through this drawing, Luke provided information about his family. Children did participate in informational writing even though parents did not identify it as such.

Gender differences in the desire to participate in writing activities were apparent. Girls spent more time engaging in writing activities than boys. Families of girls discussed how their children requested time and materials to draw pictures and practice their letters. The families with boys offered their struggles with getting their children interested in writing. Allen and Richard's mother was very concerned that her boys were not writing and questioned, "How can you go to kindergarten not knowing how to write your name?" The differences between boys and girls were evident in what they choose to draw. The girls drew pictures of people or things and the boys drew pictures of action. The gender differences may be related to differences in parental modeling of writing. Fathers wrote less than mothers and sons appeared to write less than daughters.

Even though writing was a nonfiction literacy routine for young children, it occurred less frequently than reading. Every family mentioned their own personalized

routine for reading but no one mentioned a routine for writing. Children decided when they wanted to participate in writing type activities, where as reading was seen as a required daily event.

Siblings and Grandparents

Mothers were not the only literacy sponsors of children's nonfiction literacy development as siblings and grandparents played a significant role. A child's siblings were also subjected to the literacy sponsorship and routines of the house. Older siblings demonstrated and taught new literacy events to younger siblings. Parker's mother reported that her older son taught Parker "different stuff. "This is how you count to this is how you count to 100 by 5s." Homework assigned to older siblings became a family literacy event. Alex's mother expressed how her older son's homework influenced what they talked about at home. "His homework this week is about snow. So I am sure we are going to learn about snow." On the flip side, younger siblings wanted to be involved in everything that their siblings were doing. Felicity's mother stated, "If I am doing homework with my older daughter, then Felicity wants to be right there in the middle of it." Allen and Richard's mother described how the older siblings influenced the younger siblings' book selection.

> It has been neat for the boys when I have picked out a book for them and one of the girls will come in and say 'I love that book.' They kind of reinforce each other's interests and experiences.

Siblings played the role of both student and teacher as knowledge was shared, expanded, and shaped through their interests and desires. Siblings were a significant sponsor of young children's nonfiction literacy as they presented parental values and beliefs in a new light.

Grandparents were also a major sponsor of young children's nonfiction literacy as children spent extended periods of time with their grandparents. Grandparents had similar cultural, educational, and religious values with those of the child's parents and they promoted literacy learning in a slightly different manner. Alex's mother stated, "Whenever they reach another milestone, we will share it with their grandmother because she is a teacher and she is really interested in getting them new books". Grandparents were seen as wise sources of information. If one does not know something, grandma and grandpa will know the answer. Parker's mother referred to this exact situation with, "What kind of food does this animal eat? I don't know. So we call grandpa. His answer is always good." Generational sponsorship was continued as the grandparents taught these young children how to do different projects. Joe's mother commented that her father "will come and do some projects with my oldest son. Put math in real practice. They built as shelf for our washer and dryer and had to do the measuring. Dad likes to teach." Grandparents were an additional source of information that families and children relied on to experience the world. In addition to siblings and grandparents, children relied on teachers to explain the world, which will be addressed in the following section.

A child's nonfiction literacy development was both promoted and hindered at home. The mothers' personal preferences for fiction were illuminated in the choices of literature selected for their children's libraries. The purpose of nonfiction was to provide information and not for enjoyment. Regardless of genre, literacy routines and events related to reading were privileged over emergent writing routines.

At School: The Sponsors, Literacy Routines and Experiences

For young children, learning experiences occurred both inside and outside the home environment. School philosophies encouraged children to learn developmentally appropriate academic concepts, social skills, and religious beliefs. Learning was centered on exploring and experiencing a theme based curriculum, free choice centers, and social interactions. Thematic units provided children with new information about a variety of topics like animals, family life, and healthy bodies. Kate's mother gave an example of how her daughter was learning from the thematic units: "She made a boat. They are learning about transportation. She was telling me that this is a ship and there are speed boats. She was telling me the different boats." Teachers selected themes from a variety of sources: published products like *Weekly Reader* and *Scholastic,* natural occurrences like changes in seasons, holidays, and what teachers have seen work in the past. The topics were informational concepts but were emphasized through both realistic and informational activities. The theme was evident in everything from the art projects to the items in the sensory tables and emphasized new vocabulary, concepts, and general information about a topic. According to Rose's teacher,

> Everything is wrapped around the theme. From the art to the books in the reading center, to the games on the learning table, to the blocks in the building center, to the dramatic play and the sensory table. Everything is wrapped around the theme. The prepackage curricula were supplemented with additional books, art projects, and field trips to enhance the learning process.

The weekly theme was presented through a combination of both nonfiction and fiction texts. A couple of the classrooms were studying the ocean and their experiences with this topic included a mixture of nonfiction and fiction texts. Nonfiction books

included the following titles: *Ocean Life, Who Lives In The Ocean*?, and *Fish is a Fish*. The fiction books included: *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish, The Biggest Thing in the Ocean, The Rainbow Fish,* and *The Commotion of the Ocean*. Picture books debating the largest fish in the ocean were paired with a nonfiction fiction book naming specific types of fish. The song of the week fictionalized how a whale swallowed the other fish in the ocean and spit it out the blow hole. Information contained in the song related to the size of the whale, food choices, and breathing patterns but it dramatized the idea of the blow hole. Children played with tubs filled with plastic sea creatures, created fish at the art table and dug through the beach sand to find matching fish. The week was completed with a trip to the aquarium where the children got to see the real life items that they had spent the week talking about, reading about, and interacting with. Thematic units promoted the informational learning through complementary texts.

Thematic units were only one part of the preschool curriculum as it also encompassed emergent literacy and academic skills. Learning centers and circle time were dedicated to developing phonemic awareness skills, the alphabetic principle, concepts, and numbers. Common routines included letter of week activities, identification of shapes and colors, counting a set number of objects, and learning one's name. James's teacher commented that her class spent a lot of time on beginning phonics skills. "We pick out letters. We are always looking at letters. That is a big thing, finding letters, learning the alphabet." Parents enrolled their children in preschool under the pretense that the children would learn thematic units and academic concepts. The purpose of the preschool curricula was to expose and teach young children about the world around them, making it informational in nature.

Teachers' Genre Preferences

The teachers defined themselves as readers of both fiction and nonfiction for different purposes. Some of the teachers expressed a similar division as the mothers in what they choose to read. They read fiction for enjoyment and nonfiction for their occupation. Rose's teacher admitted that she read "chick flicks and right now I am reading *The Girl Next Door*. I read fluff." She also said that

> For my job, we do get credit hours if we read. There has been times, like this past school year, I needed 6 credit hours so I read *The Strong Willed Child* and things like that that could help me with my classroom.

Allen and Richard's teacher gave an example of the fiction-nonfiction continuum: "I read a lot of fiction. Best sellers. Classics" and "I try to read one or two like the *Out of Sync Child*, something that is technical or with my degree. I want to learn something new." What the teachers were currently reading depended upon where they were on the continuum; if reading was for fun, then it was fiction and if it was for work, then it was nonfiction. Alex's teacher, a self proclaimed nonreader, read nonfiction texts for both enjoyment and occupation:

> I am not a reader and I am not proud to say it. I am not focused on big novels. I don't want to read *Twilight.* I don't want to read something that you have read fifty books. I like to read short things, true things. I am not a big fan of fiction. I like people and real things.

Teachers were interested in reading both fiction and nonfiction and their personal choices were reflected in the genre variety presented in the classroom (see Table 7).

Table 7

School Literacy Events

Name	Classroom Themes	Books in the Reading Center	Books Read: Teacher	Books Read: Child	Teacher as a Reader	Teacher as a Writer
Allen & Richard	Bugs Ocean Spring	23 fiction 9 nonfiction 4 Bible stories	2 fiction	3 fiction 1 nonfiction	Fiction for fun Nonfiction for occupation	Classroom newsletters Daily information sheets
Kate & Parker	Bugs Spring Easter	4 Bible stories 6 nonfiction 5 fiction	3 fiction	1 religious	N/A	N/A
Josie	Bugs Spring Easter	12 fiction 2 nonfiction Music class: homemade books Classroom: homemade book	Music class: homemade books 1 fiction	1 fiction	N/A	N/A
Michael	Bugs Spring Mother's Day	9 fiction 2 nonfiction	Music class homemade books 1 fiction		Fiction for fun Nonfiction for occupation	M: E-mails Classroom newsletters Social networking Daily logs
Rose	Nursery rhymes Spring Bugs Mother's Day		6 fiction (nursery rhymes)		Fiction for fun Nonfiction for classroom management	Newsletters E-mails Texts Curriculum Social networking
James	Alphabet Spring Bugs	5 fiction 2 nonfiction	1 alphabet		Fantasy Science fiction	Daily logs E-mails Texts Curriculum
Felicity	Dinosaur Mother's Day Ocean Spring Easter	10 fiction 4 nonfiction 1 calendar	Bible stories Prayer Letter cards 1 nonfiction	5 fiction 1 concept 1 nonfiction	N/A	N/A
Alex	Dinosaurs Spring Bugs Letter of the week Easter Ocean	Unable to Document	Bible stories Prayer	N/A	Admits not much of a reader Prefers nonfiction-real things Does not enjoy fiction	Newsletters E-mails Texts Curriculum Social networking
Joe	Follow religious curriculum	10 fiction 5 Bible stories	5 fiction 1 concept	N/A	N/A	N/A
Luke & Keith	Follows religious curriculum	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Reading Routine at School

The routine of reading aloud at school was different than the routine at home. The children sat on the floor while the teacher sat in front of the class reading a book aloud. Typically books were read to the entire class during a designated circle time. Teachers made comments, asked questions, and provided additional information while reading. They edited texts to meet the children's current language and knowledge abilities.

Books read aloud were later placed in the reading center for the children to read on their own. Fiction and nonfiction books were available but fiction was dominant. Nonfiction books were created and read as class projects. Allen and Richard's teacher said, "We also make our own books. It is a flip book and it has animals in it. We have made several." Josie's class made a book resembling *Brown Bear Brown Bear*, but instead of a fictional portrayal of animals, this book was comprised of facts about each individual child including their name, age, favorite color, and interests. During an observation, Josie's teacher commented, "Everyone loves this book and asks to read it repeatedly." Due to the thematic nature of the classroom and possibly to the teachers' genre preferences, nonfiction texts were read aloud more often at school than at home. Fiction dominated the actual books in the classroom, but other nonfiction texts were prevalent in the classroom.

Teachers reported that they read both nonfiction and fiction aloud in their classrooms but they would not say it is a balanced amount. Fiction was the dominant genre within the classroom, as there were three fiction books for every nonfiction book. James's teacher summed up the books in her classroom with the following statements,

> It is just a variety of books. We do fiction and nonfiction. They love nonfiction. They really…that age in particular they are really learning the difference between fairy tale and real. What is true and what is false. When you give them this is a fairy tale and this is real. They love to look at those two. Like if you have a story about a flower with arms they know. They can tell you right then that it is not a real story. It is a fun fairy tale. We have a large variety.

Classroom libraries had a larger variety of genres than home libraries as teachers realized that children enjoyed both fiction and nonfiction books. The classroom library catered more to the weekly theme than the individual interests of the child or gender specific topics. Michael's teacher commented that the children in her class liked fiction better, where as James's teacher reported that the children in her class "love nonfiction." Sometimes one genre was better suited for the theme or subject matter. Alex's teacher discussed when nonfiction books were more valuable than fiction.

> When we did dental health I tried to get as much nonfiction as possible for that. Their teeth are so important. I think that in this story there are going to get their teeth pulled by a hippo. I would rather talk to them about plaque and cavities. So I prefer nonfiction for that.

Table7 outlines the genres of books within the classroom, the books read by the teacher, and the books the children read to themselves. There were more nonfiction books at school than at home, but still fiction was the dominant genre in books for young children. The incorporation of both fiction and nonfiction materials may be related to the teachers' personal genre preferences (see Table 7).

Other Nonfiction Texts at Preschool

Teachers like parents read other informational texts besides books. Common examples included labels, signs, environmental print, and calendars. Rose's teacher described the other materials that the children read in her classroom.

> The words on the board- I have words everywhere through the room so we are constantly reading them. Something on the snack-if a packaged snack comes to school, then we are constantly reading that to them. We look at the letters. We read our names on the water bottles.

Alex's teacher also commented about the materials that they read

> We read labels. When we were talking about recycling, we learned what is on the label, what the recycling sign meant, and why it would be able to be recycled. They are reading signs. When we talk about community, we talk about the different signs around the community. They know what a stop sign is, they know what a school crossing sign is and those kind of things. When we have makers on the table, we will look at the package so when they say this will get on my hands and this will not come out, I will show them on the package that this is a washable marker. I will show them the word washable and tell them what this means. You are able to do this with your hands. It will come off. We read all kinds of things.

Children were exposed to nonfiction texts through environmental print even though teachers did not label these activities as nonfiction.

Names of People.

A popular nonfiction text included the child's name. Everyone has a name that is unique to them. In the lives of young children, names were used for identification, possession, transitions and to mark developmental milestones. A child's name was displayed in their rooms at home and on the bulletin boards at school and discussed on a daily basis. Their names were used to identify art projects, water bottles, and personal clothing items. In both Alex and Felicity's classrooms, name tags were used to assign seats at snack time. Name flashcards were placed at each seat and the child had to sit in that seat. Sometimes the flashcards displayed the children's first names and other times it displayed their last name. As the children sat in their assigned seats, they discussed the particular letters in their name as opposed to the letters in the friend's names, the length of their name, and first and last names. In Rose's classroom, the teacher used name

flashcards with the children's first and last names to dismiss the class for snack time. She held up one flash card at a time and the child had to stand up when they saw their name and head over to the snack table. Rose's teacher said, "We do first and last names. By the end of the year, they can recognize everyone's first and last names, not just their own. They know what everyone's looks like." From a very young age, children were exposed to the letters, shape, and purpose behind their name. This unique expository text was used as identification and explanation of people. Names were identified and read like any other informational material.

Young children were exposed to nonfiction and informational texts at school, but fiction still dominated their literature diets. To meet the needs of the curriculum, teachers were more likely to incorporate nonfiction literature into their classroom. Their personal preferences still weighed heavily on the genre of the materials selected for the classroom. Informational learning experiences were evident at school and were experienced through reading and writing events.

Teachers as Writers

For teachers, the purpose of writing was to communicate both professionally and personally. At school, teachers wrote daily sheets that informed the parents of the child's day, monthly newsletters to update classroom themes and activities, and lesson plans. Allen and Richard's teacher commented, "We do write an article one time a month on what our class is doing." Rose's teacher also commented,

> Dailies. I write lesson plans, monthly newsletters. Right now we are working on next year's curriculum book. We are actually, this is our first year that we are required to do this. We are going to go through the entire school year –why we choose the curriculum and write a paragraph on each theme about why we selected that. That way when parents come in for a

> tour she [the director] can hand them our curriculum book and they can understand why we are teaching these things.

Writing was defined in terms of technology as teachers accessed social networking sites, text messages, and emails to communicate with their student's families. Three of the teachers made comments that their schools were trying to "go green" by going paperless and everything was being done on the computer. Alex's teacher said it was the first year that the preschool had its own computer and it was a quick way to send out reminders like "wear your yellow shirt tomorrow for the field trip or school is closed on Friday due to the holiday." For teachers, writing was a communication tool used to convey information about what was happening inside the classroom. Even though the amount of writing that teachers participated in was limited, they understood the importance of early exposure to written language within the classroom.

The teachers self admitted that they did not do a lot of writing outside of the classroom. Most personal communication was maintained through technology like text messages, emails, and social networking sites. Some of the teachers mentioned writing cards, letters and invitations to family members on specific occasions. The teachers wrote lists and maintained calendars to uphold household duties and activities. It was difficult for these teachers to come up with examples of writing in their personal lives.

Writing at School

At preschool, writing was a routine. Children were frequently encouraged to write during free centers, art time, and as class projects. The writing center was always a choice but there was not a designated time in which all the children were required to participate in writing related activities at the same time. Writing materials were kept on the

children's level and were accessible throughout the day. Alex's teacher described some of the writing routines of her classroom.

> The kids are more drawing. I have gotten them into drawing more. If they draw something then I will write on the side of it what it is. We have created a book that will go home with them at the end of the year. They have drawn pictures of their families, their pets, their favorite food and those types of things. We will put it on there and when they are older, what is in this book. Oh this is what I did when I was 5. They will have that forever.

Alex's mother stated that he does more writing at school than at home. "At school he will write his name on every paper. His practicing writing his letters." Practicing letters at school included the letters of the child's name and the letters of the alphabet, but writing also included the emergent development of scribbles. Rose's teacher discussed writing in her classroom:

> We practice making circles and crosses. At this age it is imitates circles, imitates pencil grip. We work on learning the letters of our name, I will take a yellow highlighter on a piece of paper and give them a dark crayon and see if they can trace the letters. I look for their pencil grip and their fine motor skills. They do get some writing but not a whole bunch. Usually it is a bunch of scribbles but it is working those fine motor skills.

Teachers were more flexible in their definition of writing than parents were but still stressed the importance of writing one's name. Art work must be labeled with the child's name, sometimes written by the child and sometime written by the teacher.

During various art projects, teachers had the children dictate a story and posted these stories with the project. Writing at school was for informational purposes. Children were not writing fictional stories but were writing to covey information about themselves or their projects. Parker and Kate's class was studying day and night and had

consequently made a sun and dictated a story about what they like to do during the day. The following statement was written on Kate's sun: "Kate likes to play on her playground and ride horses during the day." Parker's sun: "During the day, Parker likes to play with animals at school and go to McDonald's by mom's work." Children were producing their own nonfiction texts. Even though children had more opportunity to write at school, then they did at home, reading was still a favored literacy event. Writing was more evident at school than at home, but was still a limited routine when compared to reading events. Reading was a scheduled event, where as writing occurred at the will of the child. The three parts of emergent literacy include reading, writing, and talking, but with these participants religion was an additional component seen at home and at school.

Religion Practices

A child's learning at home and school was not only set up to prepare them for the academic side of the classroom but also to help them become a virtuous and faithful individual. Religious beliefs and practices were at the forefront of these families lives and were reflected in the literacy events of young children. As Joe's mother stated, "I want them to have an appreciation for how God is working in their lives, so we attend church, read the Bible, and be thankful." Felicity's mother explained that her girls ask "a lot of questions about God and Heaven and I want them to have an understanding of our beliefs." Their understanding comes from "reading Bible stories. We work on memorizing her verses for church. We are very active at church."

Religion was a major sponsor of young children's nonfiction development as these families saw the Bible as truth. Joe's mother even reported "I haven't read anything nonfiction to Joe except for Bible Stories." Bible stories are typically written in a

narrative format, which is traditionally reserved for fiction. Children were not learning expository text structures or vocabulary related to nonfiction texts through these experiences but they were learning the "truth" in the eyes of their families. The Bible shaped the children's understanding of the world by providing answers, eliciting particular behaviors, and promoting a faithful lifestyle. Felicity's mother explained that her girls,

> Ask a lot of questions about God and Heaven. And when we are reading Bible stories they are very curious of why Jesus would tell them to do things or why they would do the things they said. I guess understanding the concept of God. They really ask a lot of questions about that. When it comes to God-it is because it is the way God did it. God is bigger and more knowing than we are. His plan is smarter and better than ours.

A child's daily life included time devoted to religious learning both as means to help them understand and experience the world. Faith played such a large role in families' lives that parents sought out early educational settings for their children that reinforced their religious beliefs.

In general, educational settings mirrored parental personal beliefs and practices related to religion. The denominations of Christian faith varied from school to school but all of them encouraged young children to learn and practice their emerging faith. As Michael's teacher stated, "We are a Christian school, and we can talk about Jesus." When looking at the *Story of Easter*, Kate commented to herself, "It is about Jesus. We have a lot of books about Jesus." Children attended religious classes like Chapel and "Jesus time" where they learned various prayers, Bible stories, and the truth. Just like at home, religious stories and events were considered to be nonfiction texts. Children were exposed to a variety of Bible stories that explained God's plan for the world. Materials

like stories, drawings, film strips were used during these classes used to highlight a specific Bible teachings. Believers saw this information as the truth; therefore it was not considered fiction. The Bible was a nonfiction source of information that both explained the purpose of the world and defined righteous behavior. Children attended preschool to learn both religious practices and academic skills. The cultural religious values of the sponsors were previously unidentified as influencing a child's nonfiction literacy development.

Young children's nonfiction literacy development was shaped by the religious beliefs and practices of their family and school. Religious teachings were understood to be nonfiction by teachers, parents and children. This classification of religious literature blurs the genre lines between fiction and nonfiction and challenges the genre classifications set out in children's literature text books (Kiefer et al., 2007).

Community

Teachable moments spilled over into community settings. Experiences in the community fostered print motivation and children quickly learned to recognize the environmental print associated with their favorite places. Alex's mother said, "the simple stuff the boys can read, McDonalds, Pizza Hut. Anything like that." Families took their children to places where learning was encouraged through hands on activities. Field trips to the zoo, aquarium, museum, and library were common routines. These places brought topics of interest to life, stimulated explanations, and promoted wonderment. Children's curiosities about animals, how they move, what they eat, and what they look like spurred parents to find opportunities like the zoo and the aquarium for their children to see real life animals. Parker's mother described the field trips that her family regularly attended,

"We go to the zoo and the aquarium. We are going to the dinosaur museum in New Mexico as a part of our vacation. He will be so excited." Josie and Michael's mother provided insight into their family's field trips,

> We go to the zoo when it is nicer. We go the park and walk around and look at the trees and the waters. Whatever there is to do there. We do family vacations. Different places to see and do. We will start going to plays and things like that. Sometimes we go shopping. We talk about the food we buy. We give them the opportunity to see other people.

Informational learning was a natural consequence of field trips as information was obtained through hands on experiences.

Library Visits

Library visits were a common field trip and looked similar from family to family. Families attended the library to check out books of interest. Everyone in the family borrowed numerous books. Children freely selected books from the various shelves and placed them in the take home pile. Books were read both during the visit and later at home. Allen and Richard's mother described a typical visit to the library.

> When we all go we us the newest branch. It is big and open and they have got a pretty large kids area. The boys will usually go. They know where the nonfiction on cars are. They immediately go toward that. They will choose two or three books each that are completely their choice and they will sit down and read while we are at the library. The girls know where their books are. They all know where their favorite books are in the library. They will usually go pick books or go look on the computer for a certain book that they want. They will pick out their own books. While they are doing that, I am usually picking out books that I think they would like. We get a combination of my ideas and their ideas.

Some families pre-selected the books online but still spent time in the library looking at books. James and Rose's mother commented that

> The library is not very useful. The fiction is just a wall of books and you have to know the author and they don't, so they will just pull books off the shelf. They will look at a few books there. James likes the nonfiction section because he likes the books with the tanks and things. I don't

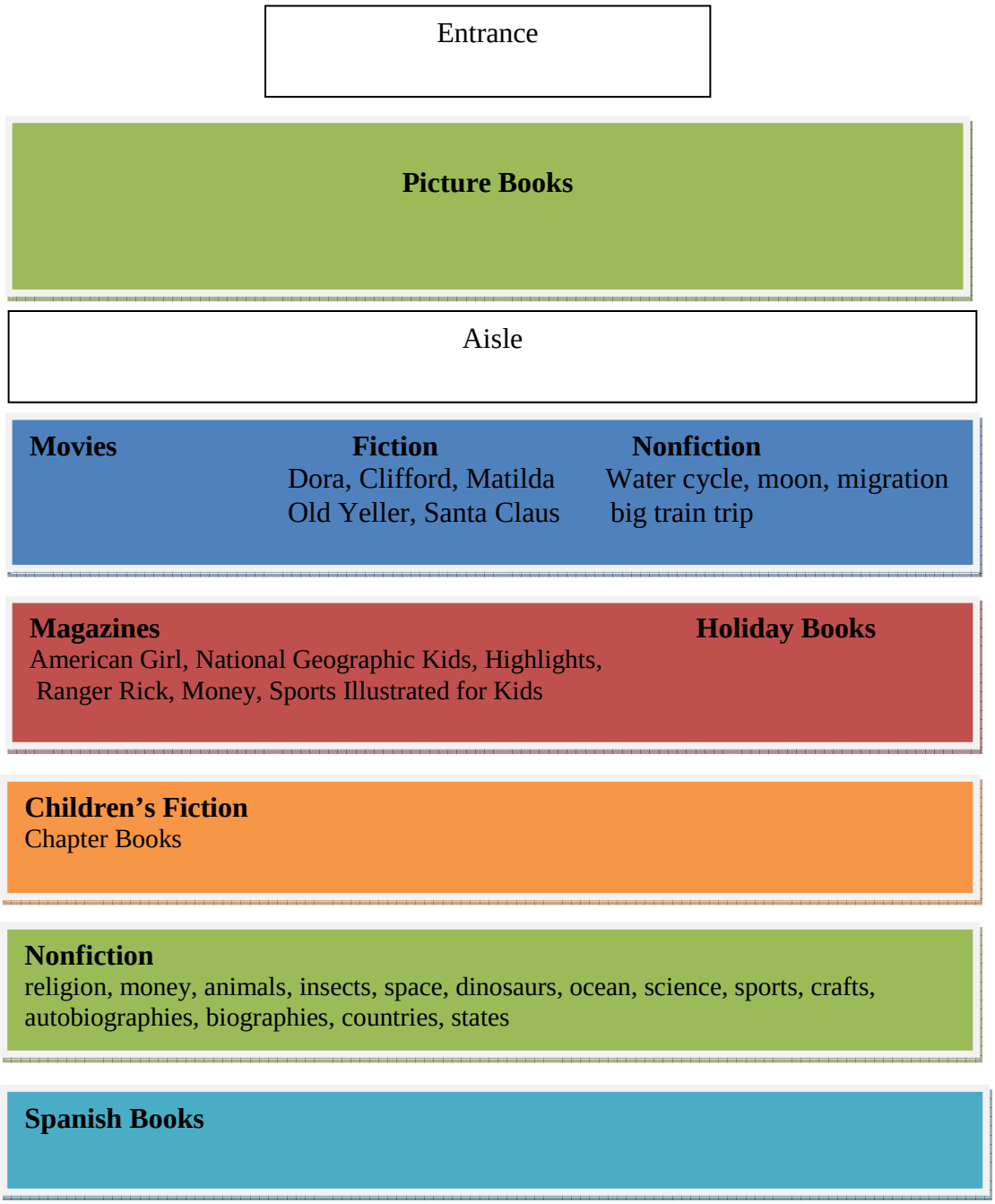
> find…I mean if they are interested in something I have to find the books for them. I usually do that online and get them.

A couple of the families mentioned accessing the other services at the library including story time, movie rentals, and other events. Felicity's mother stated, "They go to the weekly story time. We are regulars there. The librarian knows all of us by name. We love the library. If they have special vents we try to go to them." During one observed story time, the librarian read three books and sang a handful of finger plays with the varying number of children in attendance. All three of the books were fictional stories about alligators. The children's librarian did not introduce or read one nonfiction text during story time. The finger plays contained elements of information including colors, numbers, and clothing but the songs were still fictional. Story time privileged fictional texts over nonfiction.

For young children, the physical layout of the library promoted interest in fictional materials over nonfiction texts. Figure 1 diagrams the physical layout of one of the libraries, with each row representing a different aisle in the library. The main entrance of the library took patrons directly to the children's section and the library spread out from there (see Figure 1).

In the children's section, there were numerous shelves filled with picture books. The child sized shelves provided easy access for young children to select books and all of the displayed books were fiction. Child sized tables and chairs, bean bags, and large window seats were inviting places to share a book with a parent or a sibling.

Figure 1. The Physical Layout of the Children's Section of the Library



The children appeared to be comfortable selecting and looking through the books in this section, as this is their designated section of the library. Joe's mother said,

> We go to the library every week if not a couple times a week. He knows where the kids' books are. He makes a beeline there and he gets his books.

> He likes pictures and picture books. As soon as we hit the door, he is gone to the kids' books looking for books.

The set up of the library promoted easy access to fictional books where as nonfiction books were only accessed if a child was looking for a specific topic.

The children's nonfiction books were stored five aisles away from the picture book section. Children had to pass by the movies, the magazines, the fictional chapter books before they reached the nonfiction section. The nonfiction books were organized by topic on floor to ceiling shelves. Unlike the picture book section, these books were not at the children's level which limited access. Printed word labels with no pictures were used to identify the topics such as animals, space, and dinosaurs. The young participants were in the emergent stages of reading and were incapable of reading these labels at this age; access was limited again. This section of the library did not have comfortable child sized chairs or open spaces to read books. There were no books on display to entice young children to explore this genre. Children did not select books from this section because it was not their designated space within the library.

During the observed library visits, two out of the three families only selected books from the children's fiction section. These two families did not encourage their children to access any books outside of the children's fiction area. Allen and Richard preferred books from the nonfiction section but occasionally filtered in and out of the children's section. All the mothers of boys mentioned that they had selected books from the nonfiction section to meet the interests of the children. The mothers of girls never mentioned the nonfiction section of the library or encouraged their daughters to select books from this genre. The physical landscape of the library sponsored an appreciation

for fiction while limiting access to nonfiction and the mothers reinforced the negative sponsorship of nonfiction access for girls.

The community was a sponsor of children's nonfiction literacy development. Field trips promoted informational learning, where as the physical set up of the library limited access to nonfiction. Nonfiction literacy development was shaped by people including the child, the places they created and their personal practices.

The Child

The young children themselves were significant sponsors of their own nonfiction learning and experience both at home and at school. Even though parents and teacher provided the opportunities for children to learn about the world around them, children decided what was important and valuable to meet their personal curiosities. A common wondering among young children was how and why things work the way that they do. Parker's mother said her boys want to know, "How things work? Why they work? Why does it rain? Why do we have clouds? Why the clock goes round and round?" James's mother said,

> He likes to know how things are made. Like today he asked me how they make electricity and of course I have no idea. He will ask me how something works and if he doesn't like my answer he will make up his own answer of how this goes here and that goes down there, the lever gets pulled and this falls down and that kind of thing. We have gotten books on everything: tractors, tanks.

Children had desired answers to these questions, which encouraged families and teachers to find informational experiences like books, field trips, and toys to fulfill their curiosity. Josie and Michael's mother described her children's interests.

> Michael is really into tools and how things work. Josie is very interested in the why. We have books and do a lot of talking. We always try to answer their

> questions. We try to give them an answer whether we are a 100% right or not. They are learning.

The families were very aware that their children were interested in the world around them. At this age, the children were driven to find answers to how and why things are the way they are. The children's constant persistence for answers came in form of the endless "why" questions and they turned to their parents and teachers for answers.

Popular topics that young children were interested include animals, transportation, art, music, nature and weather. Their desires included naming objects, hands on experiences with object, and searching out factual information that builds upon their previous knowledge. They wanted to connect what they were learning about to what they already knew. They inquired about the things that were valuable to them and focused on the other items at a later date. Children sustained, repeated, and participated in literacy routines until they had reached a desired level of understanding. Their interests in the world changed as they found the answers to burning questions.

Children dictated the frequency and duration of these activities based upon interest, ability, and attention levels. Allen and Richard's mother described how one son's interests sponsored a family learning event,

> Allen loves animals; we look for opportunities. There was a turtle in the yard and we kept it for awhile. We went online to determine what we had and what it needed so we were doing it properly and let him find food and water and prepare a home for it. He was also involved in letting it go and understanding that it was in the best interest of the turtle. Keeping it forever would not be good for the turtle.

This entire experience was driven by the fact that Allen was interested in his own environment and his family took advantage of this opportunity to teach him how to care for an animal.

A child's own interests shaped the amount and type of information desired and accessed. The children examined topics from a different perspective than their other literacy sponsors. They were curious about the world and wanted to understand it.

Conclusion

For these children, the literacy sponsors included mothers, teachers, grandparents, siblings who facilitated literacy events at home, school, and in the community. These sponsors shaped nonfiction literacy development in both positive and negative ways. Parents, teachers, grandparents, siblings and the child themselves were significant sponsors of these young children's nonfiction literacy development. The mothers' and teachers' personal preferences for fiction influenced the children's opportunities to engage with nonfiction texts. The father's interests in nonfiction literature did not appear to transfer to the books in the children's personal libraries. Fiction books dominated the literacy experiences of these young children. Mothers reserved selecting nonfiction books for their sons and promoted fiction materials with their daughters. In additional to personal genre preferences, there appears to be a gender bias in selecting nonfiction literature.

Places where the sponsors and children interacted such as preschool, community events, and the library shaped nonfiction literacy experiences and development. Within the preschool classrooms, teachers encouraged both academic and informational learning through various centers, read alouds, and games. Thematic units and field trips inspired

and reinforced informational learning through hands on activities. The physical arrangement of the library limited how children accessed and interacted with nonfiction literature. Is this physical layout a reflection of the librarian's view of appropriate literature for children or is it an arbitrary organization? Various places shaped the young children's nonfiction literacy by physically encouraging or limiting access to nonfiction materials.

The sponsors' personal practices influenced how and when the young children were exposed to nonfiction. According to parents and teachers, religious beliefs were one of these children's earliest experiences with nonfiction literature. This belief blurred the genre line between traditional literature and nonfiction creating a nontraditional opportunity to promote nonfiction literacy development. Reading events and routines were privileged to writing. Mothers and teachers understood the importance of early reading experiences but did not see the importance of early writing, limiting their opportunities to write.

The people and personal practices that sponsored a child's nonfiction literacy development were similar from family to family and school to school. These sponsors contributed to how children experienced and engaged with nonfiction texts at home, at school, and in the community. Literacy sponsors established and facilitated literacy routines that were reflective of their personal beliefs related to emergent literacy. Literacy sponsors promoted early literacy experiences with fiction, but limited access to nonfiction. Sponsorship was found to be both positive and negative. The ways in which these sponsor's promoted nonfiction genre knowledge will be explored in detail in the following chapter.

Chapter V

Informational Speech as Expository Text

In order to understand the world, the participant children needed information and explanation. This understanding was obtained through oral exchanges with their literacy sponsors. Literacy sponsors modeled informational speech to define topics, answer questions, and provide explanations. Informational speech is an oral exchange that incorporates definitions, explanations, and knowledge about a particular topic or event and follows the same text structure options as expository written language. Children reproduced the informational speech genre to provide information to others, confirm their understanding of concepts and topics, and to demonstrate their current knowledge. Informational speech was incorporated into common routines like art and crafts, dramatic play, and games and puzzles. I considered these informational discussions as expository texts because they conformed to the text structures of the genre. The purpose of the expository text is to convey information for a specific function, and there are several organizational structures for expository text including descriptive, sequential/procedural, compare and contrast, and cause and effect structures. Each of these four text structures was found to be represented in the children and sponsors' oral texts.

Three significant findings related to informational speech arose from this study:

1. Routines like art, dramatic play, and games and puzzles provided opportunities for speech texts.

2. Nonfiction literacy development was fostered more through oral speech genres than interactions with nonfiction literature.

3. The descriptive, procedural, and compare-contrast and cause and effect expository text structures were evident in both the sponsors' and the children's oral speech genres in ways that mirror text structures of nonfiction literature.

Opportunities for Informational Speech

Art Projects

Art projects served as a space for the young children and their literacy sponsors to discuss and explore a topic. Parents and teachers encouraged children to participate in a variety of art projects like painting, drawing, and creating holiday decorations. Sometimes the adults predetermined the overall project type and the necessary materials, but the final project was left to the child's imagination. Each project was the child's representation of real things. Michael's teacher said,

> We had a lot of fun art. We used different things from the story, a roller skate wheel. Things that they don't normally get to use for art. Those items were in the story and they got to use them for art and were in our sensory table.

Real life objects were taken from the fictional stories and incorporated into art projects as another way for children to experience these items. Their overall understanding of items came from information presented in a book and hands on art projects. In James' classroom the weekly theme was St. Patrick's Day and the art project included a leprechaun, a rainbow and a pot of gold. James used this information to create his own art. "It is a rainbow. We are talking about leprechauns looking for a pot of gold so I have a pot of gold at the end." In Felicity's classroom, children were creating garden scenes

using rubber stamps. While stamping various insects, Felicity said, “I am going to make butterflies. They are blue and red. They are supposed to live in the grass. There are a lot of butterflies.” While creating this “garden”, Felicity provided information about where butterflies live and their appearance. Another example of how art stimulated informational discussion occurred in Alex’s class as the students were drawing pictures of their own family. Alex drew a picture of his dad with no hair and his teacher commented, “You didn’t give your dad any hair. Is your dad bald? Alex replied, “Yes he is bald.” The teacher said, “Sometimes daddies are bald, and sometimes mommies too.” Alex replied, “Mommies can’t be bald.” The teacher went on to describe how sometimes people become sick and loose their hair. The art work was a representation of Alex’s family, but the conversation provided new information about who could be bald. Art projects promoted informational discussions both within and across natural environments.

Art projects were representations of real concepts, ideas, and topics which naturally fostered informational discussions about the current subject matter. The young children used the art projects as a springboard to integrate new learning with existing information and to gain additional understanding of the topic. Informational discussions occurred naturally within the context of art projects.

Dramatic Play

Play is a young child’s work. Children demonstrated their knowledge through dramatic play scenarios. Dramatic play structure was defined by the child’s own imagination and was often modeled after real life events and situations. Rose and James frequently played store where they used real money to buy their own toys. “We play toy shop a lot. We have money. I will say that something is three pieces of money. I don’t

care if they hand me twenties or one dollar as long as they hand me three." The language in this play scenario reinforced the concept that one must have money to purchase desired items, and provided an opportunity to discuss the dominations of each bill. The young children practiced the concept of shopping even if it was for things that they already owned. In Alex's class, they were pretending to be paleontologists by discovering fossils in white chocolate chunk cookies. The white chips were dinosaur fossils and the chocolate chunks were other kinds of fossils. The children were not going to find real fossils in a chocolate chip cookie but it gave them the opportunity to discuss the physical appearances and differences between the chocolate chip fossils and the white chocolate fossils. The parental role was often dramatized during play. Josie was observed playing with her baby dolls and made the following statements, "I got my babies. I found a potty. It's for my big doll. I think Dora needs to go to the potty. Wipe. I am going to put big girl panties on because she pooped in the potty." Josie incorporated language she had heard on a previous occasion to provide information about her babies' 'biological' needs and when one is afforded the opportunity to wear big girl panties.

Many of the children had a pretend kitchen filled with a variety of plastic food like pineapples, tomatoes, corn, bananas, and hot dogs. As children played with these toys, they discussed the real names, colors, and general physical appearance of the food items. In Rose's classroom the children were playing in Old Mother Hubbard's pantry and were pretending to cook various dishes. They served a combination of the real food and new dishes where some food items became something completely different. Doughnuts were cakes, carrots were French fries, and empty cups were filled with hot chocolate. While playing, Rose provided information about appropriate food for dogs

versus people. “The biscuits are for the dogs—people eat cheetos.” In her opinion the biscuits were dog food and cheetos were for people. Kate and her mother were also observed playing with pretend food. Kate incorporated her previous knowledge of different types of beverages to create and discuss a new drink. She described the drink in terms of flavor, temperature, and additional ingredients.

> Kate: It is lemonade grape tea. I put tea and sugar.
> Mom: It is hot. Can I blow on it?
> Kate: No. You just need to wait.
> Mom: I like this lemonade. What kind is this?
> Kate: Orange.

Dramatic play with pretend food was a common routine seen at home and at school as it fostered an opportunity to share information through discussion.

Various plastic animals, sea creatures, and dinosaurs were played with on regular basis. Like the food, these toys were representations of the real object. The children knew the difference between real and fake objects but played with these toys as if they were real. They made these toys act like they were eating, drinking and interacting with others. During one observation, Parker was explaining the different dinosaurs, their names and their physical attributes to me. He felt like I did not understand him so he got his plastic dinosaur toys to demonstrate exactly what he was talking about. He said, “This (dinosaur) is a nice one and this one (dinosaur) is a mean one. This is his mouth. He eats plants. Meat eaters do the roaring. Do you know what a meat eater is? He eats meats. You see the size of his footprints. See the difference between the meat eater and the plant eater.” Parker identified and explained the differences between ‘meat eaters’ and ‘plant eaters through oral language. Toys were fictional representations of the real dinosaurs but they emphasized our discussion related to their real physical characteristics and attributes.

Dramatic play was a common learning routine seen both at home and school. The young children incorporated common experiences and toys into their discussions about current topics. Dramatic play scenarios reflected a child's current understanding of the information and language presented to them by others in similar routines.

Games and Puzzles

Games and puzzles reinforced academic concepts, social skills, and thematic units in the classroom. Popular games included *Candy Land, Hi Ho Cherrio, Bingo,* and *Memory.* Each of these games emphasized academic skills like colors, counting, and matching. These nonfiction concepts were presented in a fictionalized format. Some of the games relied on popular television characters to entice young children to learn these concepts. Keith, Luke and their mother were playing a game based upon the fictional character of Diego. Each person had a game board with various pictures of animals (e.g. llamas, jaguars, and pumas) from a particular category (e.g. walkers, flyers, swimmers, and climbers) and drew a card to match to the correct picture. Through discussion of how to categorize the animals, the boys were learning the different characteristics of each animal.

Keith: I have Tuccans. Five of them.
Mom: I have 5 penguins. Those are owls. Do owls fly?
Keith: Yes
Mom: They (the penguins) must be swimmers. I have them on my card.

Rose and James played a game on the computer emphasizing phonemic awareness and early phonics skills. Each letter of the alphabet had a letter/sound correspondence game, a song, and a reinforcing activity. Rose wanted to play the gumball game because she liked how the gumball comes out of the machine.

Mom: "Let's try the G because gum starts with g."

Computer flashed pictures of: G ga girl gorilla guitar go
Rose: “Green means go” (referring to the stop light for go)
Mom: “What does red mean?”
Rose: “Stop”
Mom: “Click on a coin to get a gumball. Which coin? That is a quarter.”
Computer puts the money in the gumball machine and gum comes out on the screen.

These types of games conveyed information about letter sound correspondence through imaginary settings and characters. Young children accessed other educational games via various forms of technology including the computer and hand held video game systems. Nonfiction concepts and academic skills were fostered by playing fictional games.

Like games, puzzles were designed to teach specific concepts. Alex was putting an alphabet floor puzzle together that highlighted cartoon illustrations of real occupations that began with each letter. The introduction of different occupations provided an opportunity to learn something new.

Mom: What does E look like?
Alex: What is that? (pointing to the picture on the E puzzle piece)
Mom: Electrician. They wire your house for light.

Alex was exposed to the new vocabulary word, electrician through the conversation surround the puzzle piece. In addition to learning new vocabulary, puzzles fostered discussions about phonemic awareness and early phonics skills. Felicity and her father were observed looking over a puzzle to find hidden objects that start with a particular sound. The following conversation is an illustration of how letter and sound knowledge was discussed.

Dad: Can we find something that starts with A?
Felicity: I don’t want to because it is hard.
Dad: Let’s see airplane-what does that start with?
Felicity: A. Let’s find apples. Apples start with A.

Games and puzzles are typically designed to teach a specific academic concept or skill, but in the lives of these young children games and puzzles provided a space for informational discussions. The young children and their literacy sponsors used the information presented through the games and puzzles to learn and express new information about the current subject matter.

The alternative formats of art, dramatic play and games and puzzles opened the door for informational conversations between the young children and their literacy sponsors. These routines were typical designed to teach specific concepts and skills, but were valuable in facilitating informational discussions. Parents and teachers may not identify these routines as opportunities for informational speech; therefore further education is needed to continue to promote these discussions through these formats.

Informational Speech as Expository Text

Expository texts are written to convey information for specific function or purpose and the purpose of the text drives the overall organization of the text. The four main types of expository texts include descriptive, compare and contrast, procedural/sequential, and cause and effect structures. The language used by the young children and their literacy sponsors reflected the same text structures and purposes used in expository texts.

Descriptive Text Structure

Between two and five years old, young children rapidly develop their vocabulary. The participants wanted to know the name for everything in their world and asked “What is that?” over and over until they learned the new vocabulary. Sponsors used the descriptive speech genre to label and describe objects, to describe current events or

activities, and to teach new vocabulary. Informational texts employing the descriptive text structure typically explain a topic and its subtopics in great detail, sometimes moving from something known to something unknown (Bamford & Kristo, 1998). Figurative language is often used to further explain a topic (Sanders & Moudy, 2008).

All sponsors, including the children themselves participated in providing a name for objects and concepts and describing its individual characteristics. Labeling occurred during a variety of literacy routines: reading books, playing with play dough, and dramatic play with toys. While playing with a blow-up fish toy, Josie explained to her brother, "Look, I have Nemo. He has a fin and he is orange. He has a mouth. He has stripes. I don't have stripes. I just have a purple dress." Josie gave her toy a name and labeled the parts of the fish for her brother. She provided him with the knowledge that the object and its particular parts had a label. She also made a comparison to something she knows well-herself; making such comparisons is one common writing technique used in descriptive informational writing and we clearly see it here in Josie's speech. Another child, Kate employed the descriptive informational speech genre while a drawing a picture Kate commented, "We need to make a princess. She needs a crown. She needs a long dress. She needs a body. She needs fancy shoes. Now we need to make a prince." An ordinary girl did not fulfill Kate's needs; it had to be a princess complete with all the accessories which she communicated well with this descriptive speech genre. At the end of this oral text, she stated her next topics. In writing, we might imagine this change in topic to the prince to indicate a change in paragraphs.

Sometimes the descriptive informational talk was used to provide information about current events. During one home visit, James described an upcoming trip. "We are

going to Ellington to see a buddy. He has a lot of big toys. He has a big playroom. It is a long drive by highway. Enough time to take a nap." James started out with a description of where they were going, described what his friend's house had inside, and then moved to the subtopic of the length of the trip. His description included details about both the main topic of the trip and the subtopic of the friend's house which follows the pattern of descriptive text structure. Another example of a child using the descriptive text structure was observed while Kate was completing an art project. She described the main topic of the appearance of her bunny and introduced the subtopic of why they were making a bunny.

> I am going to make him polka-dot. He is pink. His going to be a little brown. Look it is dripping. He eats carrots. I am making a bunny because it is Easter. We do painting. I'm making him pink. Pink all over. Just pink. Pink is my favorite color because it is beautiful. I am painting his ears.

She described what it looked like and what it ate, which are common components of most animal books. Her description of each of these components was brief, but it is there. Young children incorporated the features of descriptive text structure into their oral language quite easily and skillfully to provide information about a topic.

The descriptive structure was evident in oral language as a means to explain a novel word or concept. During one observation, Felicity and her mother were reading a book that had a picture of a bee hive in it. Felicity saw the picture and instantly said, "That is a bumble bee home." Her mother responded with, "Yes that is a bumble bee home. It is called a hive." This interaction introduced Felicity to a new word, *hive*. Without a label, Felicity might have continued to call this structure a home and not the more

accurate word of hive. Felicity used the word that was familiar to her and her mother used that opportunity to teach a new word. A similar interaction occurred between Keith, Luke and their mother when reading a story. The story used the word *blushing* and Keith asked his mother "What is blushing?" She responded, "Blushing is when he turns red, when he is embarrassed." The children were given the label to describe a new emotion. Alex's teacher discussed a recent "teachable moment" where descriptive expository talk was used to explain the concept of friction.

> The other day we were talking about how a match works. We were getting ready for Jesus time and someone asked how the matched worked. I explained to them what a match is made out of and then we discussed friction. And so we rubbed our feet on the floor and we rubbed our hands together and we discussed how hot that is and how that is friction. It makes it heat up. The friction of running the match over the black strip that causes friction and it makes it light.

Alex's teacher described the topic of friction through multiple subtopics what the match is made out of, examples of friction, and the effects of friction (heat). This informational discussion conformed to the descriptive text structure as it included both a label and description of the concept of friction and provided examples of how friction creates heat. Adults spontaneously modeled the descriptive informational speech to explain novel vocabulary and experiences. Their inclusion of this genre was not a part of a planned lesson, but instead occurred within a teachable moment.

The purpose of descriptive informational speech genre was to explain a topic and possible subtopics in great detail. The descriptive informational speech identified parts of an object, described the physical characteristics and attributes of objects, and provided examples of specific concepts. In traditional descriptive text, definitions of new words are provided through bold face words, glossaries, and text boxes. In informational speech,

these definitions were discussed during early learning experiences and routines. Literacy sponsors did not plan to discuss specific vocabulary terms during these events, but instead addressed a need as it came to life.

Compare and Contrast

Compare and contrast text structures emphasize the similarities and differences between two or more characteristics or qualities of a topic (Bamford & Kristo, 1998). Similarities and differences between something known and something unknown were used to connect new information to existing knowledge (Sanders & Moudy, 2008). A person might compare either an entire topic or concept to another topic or one feature to another feature comparing whole to whole or part to part (Sanders & Moudy, 2008). Superlatives may be used to demonstrate that a person or an object has at least one feature or characteristic to a greater or lesser degree than another person or object.

Literacy sponsors modeled this type of informational talk and the children implemented compare and contrast speech genre into their own informational speech. One example of a teacher modeling the compare and contrast speech genre was observed when Alex's teacher said her class compared a known animal, the sheep, with a couple of different animals. "We talked about the difference between a lamb as opposed to a gosling or a fawn. That is expanding their vocabulary right there." By comparing the lamb to other baby animals, the teacher helped the students classify the animals based upon similarities and differences of physical characteristics. Items and concepts were compared and contrasted based upon physical characteristics such as shape, color, age, ability, and overall differences. Parker's mother commented, "We talk about how girls have different parts. Girls have boobies. Girls wear makeup. Boys do not." In this case,

comparing and contrasting gender specific body parts and habits explained the differences between boys and girls. This type of talk is common place in our everyday conversation and commonplace in adult-child interactions, but what is significant here to notice and consider this language practice in terms of modeling and construction of children's knowledge of informational text.

Adults used the compare and contrast informational speech genre to teach new concepts and vocabulary. The children often used this speech genre to compare something about themselves to someone else. Josie compared her new shoes to her brother's new shoes. "Look I have Dora shoes. They don't light up. Michael has shoes that light up." She compared the shoes based upon on one feature, light or no light. Keith also used a comparison to make sure everyone knew he was the oldest. "I am the biggest. I am bigger than Luke." He used a superlative strategy seen in written text to compare his physical size with that of his brothers. The ways in which children compared and contrasted what they already knew to explain something new mirrors the compare and contrast text structure of written language.

Using Compare and Contrast Text Structure to Understand the World

The child participants were learning the difference between what was real and what was fake through a compare and contrast framework. They wanted to know the realistic nature of particular items. Therefore, they frequently made comparisons between real and fake items. James' teacher discussed her students' interest in knowing if things were real or fake. "That age in particular, they are really learning the difference between fairly tale and real. What is true and what is false." At this age, real versus fake was a specific way of comparing and contrasting two items. Parker was observed watching the

end of a documentary about Big Foot. Later while reading a book he said, “It looks like Big Foot’s hand. Big Foots are not real. Big Foots are dead.” On another observation, he was discussing the same movie and said, “Big Foot is on the History Channel. He is not real. He is just a person. I thought he was real, but he is not.” The contrast between real and fake explained the creatures of the world and maybe a precursor to distinguishing between fiction and nonfiction, an important beginning literacy skill. Parker understood that even though dinosaurs are extinct, they were once real, but Big Foot was never real, which made him fake. This contrast provided a framework for understanding his world.

Toys created another platform for the real versus fake debate. They represent real things but are not real. The children were learning how to compare their toys to real objects. Kate was observed playing with play dough and was asked if she was going to eat the food she created. She responded, “No, this food is just pretend. It is not for eating.” Kate contrasted her fake food with “real food” by emphasizing one was for consumption and the other was just for play. Another child, Alex discussed with a classmate the reality of his pet.

> Classmate: I have a pet dragon.
> Alex: Not for real!
> Classmate: Yeah for real!

Alex was comparing what his classmate was telling him with his own knowledge of real pets. The comparison between real and fake things was a developmental process for young children. Through conversation, young children learned the characteristics of a real object and compared it to something fake. Comparing real versus fake set up a dynamic where children were learning the concepts which can lead to their understanding of the difference in the print genre.

Procedural/Sequential

Procedural/sequential text structure provides information on how to complete a task with each step laid out in sequential or chronological order. The time based order typically begins with the earliest events being mentioned first (Bamford & Kristo, 1998; Sanders & Moudy, 2008). The procedures are often defined in terms of first, second, and third and so forth. Procedures are often written in the active voice and command action from unidentified participant. Both literacy sponsors and the children incorporated procedural talk to convey information about how to complete tasks, to define how things work, and to maintain order within group settings.

The children were observed developing knowledge of the procedural text structure through oral language but not through books or writing. James was curious about how the stapler worked and had the following discussion with his mother.

> James: I staple it. How many staples come out?
> Mom: Just one.
> James: No. How do they come out?
> Mom: Well. I will show you. Be very careful. Staplers are kind of dangerous things. See there are staples and when you push down the staples come out there. See.
> James: I want to staple something else, like paper.

James used the question-answer text structure to understand the workings of the stapler. He was posing questions in an organized format which are typically found in the forms of headings and subsections of written expository text. His mother was using the procedural informational speech genre to answer his questions. Her answers follow a step by step guide to how the staples come out of the stapler. In this conversation, more than one text structure is present at the same time.

Literacy sponsors especially relied on this type of procedural talk during such activities as arts and crafts, games, and music. Every art project, game and music session required the children to follow a different set of directions in order to complete the task. During art time James's teacher said, "First, I have to write your name on it. Take out your eye dropper and squeeze the top and it sucks up the paint." These directions were given in a specific order so that the end product would be a butterfly. The teacher identified the initial step by using the word "first." Kate's mother was also observed giving Kate directions for how to put the play dough in a contraption that made spaghetti. "Wait. That is too much. See it has to fit in the hole right there. Push it hard. See it coming out." On a following observation, Kate was playing with play dough again but this time was teaching a younger sibling how to complete the task. "I am going to tell brother how to play dough. Bubba this is not to eat. It is to play with. I am making little shapes for an ice cream cone, mash it, then cut it." Kate used similar procedural language as her mother had used earlier. She identified the specific order of the procedures with the inclusion of the word *then*. Another example of procedural information speech genre was heard when Josie and her mother were completing a puzzle. Josie gave the following directions, "Momma, I need help. First a star. There is Boots. Now you can put Boots together." By using the word *first*, Josie stated a specific order in order to complete the picture of her favorite cartoon character. The children were able to both follow and give a specific set of procedures to complete a task. The language incorporated into procedural informational speech used the same signal words found in expository texts to specify the chronological order of an event or activity.

In a classroom, the authority resides with the teacher as they are the ones responsible for maintaining the classroom. The following examples highlight the teachers modeling procedural talk to maintain order and establish easy transitions within a classroom setting. There were few examples of children stating the procedures of the classroom.

Alex's teacher reminded the students of the daily schedule with the following procedural statement. "It will be snack time after Jesus time, and then it will be book time. We have to do our work first." Alex's teacher modeled procedural language by incorporating the sequence words 'after" and 'then to set up the chronology of the classroom events. The order of events was explained in a specific sequence with clear steps for the children to follow. The children appeared to comprehend this statement as they took their seats at the table to complete a worksheet. Rose's teacher gave the students five minutes to clean the room between free choice centers and circle time. When the timer went off, all of toys were to be cleaned up and the children were to be sitting on the carpet for circle time. The clean up procedures were followed in the order that the teacher had directed. The children cleaned up the toys before sitting on the carpet for circle time. James's teacher used simple procedures to dismiss her students from circle time to snack time. She required the children to listen as she gave the following directions: "If you are wearing blue today, stand up, go to the sink, and wash your hands for snack time. If you are wearing pink today, stand up and wash your hands." Josie's teacher used a different set of procedures to transition her class to snack time. One child was given a wand and sat in chair in front of the class. He/she would select one child at a time to go wash their hands and when the child was finished they would say done so the

next child could be selected. Procedural/sequential speech genre established a specific chronological order of activities and events. Procedural texts were not concerned with who completes the task, but with procedural language the intended audience was the children. The written and spoken procedures use the present verb tense to identify when the task will be completed.

Rules

The procedures for any routine involved a specific set of rules that influenced behavior choices. Children were exposed to the rules of their household, classroom, and community on a daily basis. They learned the expected behavior, sequence of events, and the art of negotiation through these discussions. The rules established specific consequences for adhering to various procedures at home and school.

Rules influenced the procedures of book selection, art projects, and games. Luke stated the rules for playing with puzzles at his house "My puzzle is for the table. Its pieces are too small for the floor. My little brother is not supposed to touch it because he is too little." Luke stated the rule that puzzle was for the table, and then he gave the rationale that the puzzle pieces are too small for the floor. Lastly, he elaborated on the rule by restating the rule; his brother can not touch it because he is too little. The rule for playing with puzzles identified specific procedures about the location of the puzzle, who can play with the pieces, and who is not allowed to play with the puzzle.

Richard and Allen learned the rules to the library check out process. Their entire family checks books out at the library but one library card could only check out a maximum of fifty books. On this particular day at the library, the boys were learning that that there was not enough space on their library card to get every book that they wanted.

> Mom: You can look at them all here, but we might not take them all home. We would be over our limit. We will negotiate in a minute. We need to see what we got and what we are going to keep. We only have so much room on the card. I am not getting a book because I am still working on mine. There are 4 people getting books.
>
> Allen: I want to keep all of these books.
>
> Mom: I am noticing that there are a lot of books on the same thing. Let's count them. Each of you choose your favorite car book from the pile. Choose one.

Here the mother stated the rule that they can only check out a limited number of books at a time, further explained the rule in relation to how much room was available on the card and how many people needed to check out books, and enforced the rule by telling the children that they could only choose one book on a particular topic. She used oral language to explain the procedures for checking out books.

Two types of procedural informational speech were identified: sequence/chronological and rule/rational. Even though both types of procedural informational speech presented a specific order, the purposes were different. The sequential/chronological type of informational speech focused on the chronological order of directions to complete a task. Information was given in terms of what to do first, second, and third. This information is typically presented as a list, manual, or recipe. The rule/rational type included recommendations, warnings and established parameters to complete a desired goal.

Life Cycle

The sequential text structure typically presents information in a specific timeline, with the earliest events are mentioned before later events. Changes in an object or event

are examined in chronological order. In traditional expository texts, this text structure may also be represented as time line or a diagram.

One way the young children were exposed to sequential informational speech was through learning about life cycles. From an early age, children watched as tiny beings grew into adult forms. Growing live creatures like lady bugs, butterflies, fish, and plants, observing each stage, discussing the developmental process, and eventually letting the species go was a common practice. Children witnessed the chronological process in which things grow and develop over time. Keith and Luke grew plants in their kitchen and commented, "We planted strawberries, and look how big the sunflowers are growing!" The boys knew the plants started out as seeds and over time had become plants. Michael's teacher said, "We got lady bug eggs and watched the life cycle of the lady bugs- from larva to chrysalis." She was emphasizing that the children watched the changes in growth and development of lady bugs over a period of time. The word 'from' indicated that the lady bugs had changed over time from a larva into a chrysalis. A circle time discussion about the life cycle was observed.

> Teacher: What are butterflies before they become butterflies?
> Class: Caterpillars.
> Teacher: Our lady bugs are becoming crystallites. When they come out will they be red lady bugs?
> Class: No.
> Teacher: That is right, they will be yellow.

The teacher identified the various stages of development for both caterpillars and lady bugs. She referenced the sequential changes of the caterpillar into a butterfly by using the words 'before', 'become', 'when' and the future tense verb 'will be.' These real life science experiments explained the sequential relationship of how things grow and change

over a period of time. Each stage of development occurred in a specific chronological order that was described with time orientated language. A life cycle is frequently depicted in a diagram, chart, or chain of events, where the changes over time are visual. For these young children, the changes over time were seen in real time and not through a graphic display. Oral language signaled the developmental changes and to mediate meaning making..

Books reinforced the life cycle process that the children were witnessing first hand. Parents and teachers read both fiction and nonfiction accounts of life cycle processes. Keith and Luke's mother said, "When the humming birds are out, like last year we check out books on humming birds. And we learned a lot about their migration and what they like to eat." Parker and his family were reading a book about different animals and came across a page illustrating the life cycle of a chicken.

> Mom: See this is the chicken at 3 days gestation, 7 days gestation, and when it hatches at 21 days old. Look all the babies came out.
> Parker: Hey look, cheep-cheep.

The gestation period demonstrated the chronological order of changes that occurred as a chicken grew and eventually hatched. The chicken looked differently at three days gestation than it did eighteen days later when it hatched out of the egg. It is important to note that nonfiction books were used to learn about the life cycles and therefore presented a model of sequential texts. The inclusion of the numbers indicated the developmental sequence of changes in the animal over time.

Felicity was interested in the life cycle of her own family. She wanted to know how her parents and grandparents used to be young but now was older than she was and how she had grown and changed since being a baby. The family frequently watched old

home videos and looked through photo albums to help explain how young children grow up to become adults. Her mother described how she explained this life cycle to Felicity, "We were kids and then we grew up. Then we met and got married and had you. It is a pattern- a life cycle. We try to explain that." Here the life cycle was not illustrated in a diagram, but through the visual means of family photos and home movies. The life cycle is a naturally occurring demonstration of a sequential relationship over a period of time. Life cycles provide an authentic opportunity to model sequential speech.

The procedural informational speech genre was used to provide information in a specific set of steps or directions to complete a task. The chronological order or sequences of events like the life cycle or classroom activities were emphasized through language. Time based words like first, second, third were used to guide young children in the completion of various tasks. Verbs were presented in the active tense implying that there was a something to do or complete. Goals and justifications were stated through oral language instead of the headings typically found in written expository texts. This speech genre represented information that typically is displayed in the form of charts, diagrams, or lists in the written expository texts. The young children had limited exposure to procedural expository text as procedural writing was not modeled or encouraged by the literacy sponsors.

Cause and Effect

Cause and effect text structures demonstrate the connections between events and the consequences (Bamford & Kristo, 1998; Sanders & Moudy, 2008). There is a chronological order as one event is the direct result of an earlier action (Sanders &

Moudy, 2008). Syntax structures like if-then statements, because, and an implied if-then statements are common features of the cause and effect text structure.

Cause and effect informational language highlighted the relationship between two actions in an if-then format. It provided answers to the persistent "why" questions that young children are famous for asking and influenced their behavior as they were learning the excepted behavior for particular situations and events. Parents and teachers frequently emphasized, "If you do this, then this will be the automatic consequence of that decision." Josie and Michael's mother gave an example of when she used cause and effect statements. "If I am taking them to the store, I tell them that if they don't behave, they won't be able to come with me next time." This type of if-then statement was commonly used to modify behavior and served as a model of a cause and effect relationship. Josie also used cause and effect to change her brother's behavior. She had baby dolls sleeping and Michael was making a lot of noise. She told him, "You have to be quiet, the babies are sleeping." There is an implied "because" here as Josie wanted Michael to change his behavior and be quieter because the babies were sleeping. The cause and effect relationship between a child's actions and the consequence was frequently explained to the children. Luke's Sunday school teacher offered rewards if children memorized their weekly Bible verse. Luke said, "I got this (a ball) from church. It was because I said my memory verse." Since Luke did his homework, he was rewarded with a prize. Luke used the because syntax to explain the relationship between completing his homework and obtaining a prize. Felicity's teacher created an art project where cause and effect would have positive outcomes. She said, "Let's see what happens when we add black. Let's get the blue. Mix it all together. Watch how the colors change.

They get dark." With the statement *let's see what happens when*, the cause and effect relationship between the current color and the addition of new colors was first implied. The teacher hinted that adding additional colors would cause a change in the current color of the ocean. Later she identified the cause and effect relationship but saying *they get dark*. Children immediately witnessed the cause and effect of mixing the paint colors. The class discussed how one color caused a different effect than the addition of another color. The teacher used the visual effects and actions to reinforce the oral representations of the cause and effect relationship. With cause and effect speech, there often seems to be some real, concrete reinforcement of the meaning of the language, to demonstrate the cause and effect. Language happens in the context of life and often other communication devices are employed on concert with the oral language gestures, demonstrations and visuals.

An early understanding of cause and effect came from the weather. The participant children lived in a part of the country where the weather fluctuated on a daily basis and its effects influenced daily events. Children learned that choices about clothing, outside recess, and community outings were made based upon the current weather conditions. As a class, students dressed the "weather bear" with appropriate clothing for the current weather. The students debated the appropriate dress for a hot sunny day versus the attire for a cold windy day. During circle time, Felicity's teacher asked the "weather helpers" to give the daily weather report. After the students gave their weather report the teacher said, "There might be a problem. Do you know what happened last night? It rained, and if it rained again, then it might be too wet." The teacher used an if-then statement to illustrate that outdoor recess might not happen due to the rain. Similarly

Josie's teacher commented on how the weather may affect their plans, "We are going to have a picnic outside because it is warm and not windy. We are going to celebrate Madison's birthday. She brought extra cupcakes." The teacher modeled the because statement to explain the relationship between the warm weather and going outside for a birthday picnic. The weather was a natural display of cause and effect speech in the child's daily life. The weather was the cause and the effect was choice of clothing and participation in outdoor activities.

Lifestyle choices were explained through cause and effect statements. Felicity made the statement, "I don't have any cats or doggies. My sister is allergic to doggies and cats." It was a fact that if her family had a pet, it would make her sister sick. While reading a book about a pet baby dinosaur, Josie commented, "Dinosaur for Christmas? That is funny. I don't want a dinosaur for Christmas. I don't want it to roar. It would be too loud." Here Josie implied an if-then syntax. If she had a dinosaur, it would roar. If it roared, it would be too loud for the family. Josie already understood the effect of a roaring dinosaur and that it would not make a good pet. There is a direct connection between a roaring pet and the loudness level in the house. Parker was discussing a recent illness with his teacher and said, "I had a bad cough. I took medicine." When the medicine took effect, he would feel better. Keith explained that his muscles were big because he "drank milk and water." If you want big muscles like a superhero then you need to drink healthy options. Cause and effect informational speech genre provided rationale for why and provided rationale for the sequence of events.

The cause and effect informational speech genre was used to explain the direct relationship between events and its consequences. Common syntaxes in this text structure

included the if-then statements, because statements, and the implied if –then statements. If-then statements directly illustrated the causal relationship between one's behavior and its consequence. The because statements explained why one behavior or event was selected instead of another. The implied if-then statements were used to change behavior in relation to another occurring event. Both children and adults incorporated these statements into their speech which indicates that children are exposed to the key terms in this text structure earlier than when this text structure is taught in school.

Current Events

An unexpected display of cause and effect informational speech was the explanation of current events like natural disasters, political news, and social events. The young children's awareness of current events prompted a desire for more information about the effects of these events. The local zoo recently lost two giraffes and some of the young children were having a difficult time understanding the news of the giraffes' deaths. Felicity commented, "I wish they would get more giraffes and polar bears at the zoo because they died." Felicity used a because statement to explain why the zoo needed more animals. The effect of the recent deaths of the animals caused her to wish for new animals. Children's awareness of the world expanded past local news into national headlines. James's teacher believed her students were aware and concerned about a recent national disaster.

> They are world conscious. A couple of children came up to me and told me about the oil spill. They said, "You know there is oil in the water and it is killing the animals and the fish."

The word 'and' is linking the statements together in meaning and not just grammatically. It is a nominalization of the oil in the water so the causal statement is "the oil spill is

killing the animals and the fish." A young child's curiosities about the world expanded outside of their own natural environments. These events were seen as the cause and children wanted an explanation of the effects. Information and explanations about these events was provided through cause and effect discussions.

Conclusion

Young children experienced expository text structure through oral discussion much more frequently than through traditional nonfiction literature. Children internalized some of the expository text structures to the point where they were able to use them to explain the world to others. Each of the informational speech genres served a different purpose. The descriptive informational speech genre was used to label and describe objects, to describe current events or activities, and to teach new vocabulary. The compare and contrast speech genres was used to emphasize the similarities and differences between two or more characteristics or qualities of a topic (Bamford & Kristo, 1998). Similarities and differences between something known and something unknown were used to connect new information to existing knowledge. The procedural/sequential informational speech genre provided a step by step guide to complete a task or to understand processes such as the life cycle. Each step was laid out in sequential or chronological order. The cause and effect informational speech genre made connections between events and the consequences (Bamford & Kristo, 1998; Sanders & Moudy, 2008).

The young children were exposed to informational speech genres much earlier than children are typically exposed to the similar text structures in a written format. Since the young children were able to both understand and incorporate these text structures into

their own language and interactions with others, this type of language could be a springboard for earlier exposure to nonfiction. Even though literacy sponsors appeared to naturally use informational speech genres in their conversations with young children, they were unaware that this language matched the text structures of nonfiction texts. The informational speech genres could help children access and comprehend informational texts earlier and serve as a model for written language beyond the five paragraph essay.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The definition of a literacy sponsor is an individual, group, organization, or entity that fosters or hinders another individual's literacy (Brandt, 1995). For the young children in this study, literacy sponsors included people, places were where they interacted and their personal practices. Each of these sponsors shaped a child's nonfiction literacy experiences in a different manner than the other as some fostered and others hindered nonfiction literacy development. The decision to foster or to hinder experiences did not appear to be a conscious one; it was almost as if sponsors were completely unaware of this dynamic. Literacy experiences were related to the values of the particular sponsor and did not seem to be explicitly designed to promote a specific genre. Sponsors exposed young children to nonfiction texts but only occasionally in the traditional sense of nonfiction books. The books shared with children were largely, if not entirely fiction depending on the family or the setting. Children were primarily exposed to informational texts through oral language that frequently mirrored expository text structures. Adults modeled the informational speech genres and the children utilized this language in their own interactions with their literacy sponsors. Nonfiction literacy development was also fostered when nonfiction and fiction components were used as complimentary texts. In sum, the literacy sponsors played a critical role in shaping the nonfiction literacy experiences of young children.

The children were naturally curious about the world around them. They sought information about the who, what, when, where, why, and how as the world was new to them. Literacy sponsors expanded the children's curiosity and wonderment through topics and concepts that they believed to be important for the child to have an overall understanding of the world. Young children were particular about the information they desired, and some topics did not meet their current interests. Boys and girls were equally curious, but the objects of their curiosity differed. Boys were interested in transportation and dinosaurs and the girls were interested in people and animals.

Why did young children have such limited experiences with nonfiction books? The genre preferences of the female literacy sponsors appeared to be a driving force in the genre selected for young children. The female literacy sponsors enjoyed reading fiction and passed their personal interests onto the children's literature selections and options in various environments. Nonfiction books were not encouraged or considered as enjoyable reading material by many of the mothers either for themselves or for their young children. The fathers may have used nonfiction for personal uses, but the fathers were not the designers of literacy experiences for the children - the mothers were. So the fathers' personal genre preferences appeared to have little impact on the children's exposure to nonfiction.

Some parents sought out nonfiction when the fiction texts failed to answer their child's curiosities. Finding age appropriate nonfiction books was a difficult task as most of the books that the parents and teachers found were either written above or below the child's current language abilities, were perceived as gender specific topics, or were irrelevant to the child's current interests. For this age group, nonfiction books ranged

from too much information, which made comprehension difficult, or not enough new information, which made it boring for the children. In some cases, it was easier for parents and teachers to verbally edit the content of the nonfiction books to meet child's needs and abilities. The real life pictures within the nonfiction books seemed to catch the children's attention more than the other expository text features. The role of nonfiction texts in the lives of these young children was limited largely because their literacy sponsors preferred fiction.

In order to answer the research question related to identifying and describing the nonfiction literacy routines of children between the ages of two and five years old, I observed them at home, at school and on library visits. The nonfiction literacy routines fell into the following categories: pre-academics/kindergarten readiness, art projects, dramatic play, games and puzzles, book selection at the library, family reading time, and writing and drawing. The literacy sponsors did not specifically identify these routines as nonfiction, but they did believe these routines contributed to the child's overall learning experiences. The young children learned new vocabulary, concepts, and social practices during these routines. Early exposure to numbers, colors, and shapes where common experiences at home and at school and were considered by the adult sponsors to be important skills for kindergarten. Art projects, dramatic play, games and puzzles were spaces for informational speech. Religious teachings and practices were considered to be the children's earliest experiences with nonfiction texts. Community field trips brought various an animals and creatures to life. The young children gained information and knowledge about the animal's physical appearance, habitat, and lifestyle by seeing the

animal in person. In general, parents and teachers facilitated nonfiction literacy routines that meet both the personal interests of the child and the cultural values of the sponsors.

In general, nonfiction reading and expository writing routines were limited. Reading routines were dominated by fiction both at home and school, although teachers were more likely to incorporate nonfiction texts as a means to emphasize specific classroom themes. Themes were informational in nature but the presentation was not strictly expository. The young children were encouraged to read labels and real pictures which are two features of nonfiction texts. Writing routines were limited to identifying and practicing the letters in the child's name. The young children were observed drawing informational pictures, even though this activity was not considered an example of writing or nonfiction. Limited experiences with nonfiction texts might limit a child's ability to incorporate the text structures and features of expository text into their own attempts at written language.

The young children constructed nonfiction genre knowledge through exposure to informational speech and not through reading and writing experiences with nonfiction texts. The informational speech genre incorporated definitions and explanations as a means to provide information and answer questions about a particular topic. Informational discussions were formatted in a style that reflected the expository text structures of descriptive, compare and contrast, procedural, and cause and effect texts. Expository texts structures are written to convey information through a specific function or purpose and the informational speech genre emulated the same pattern. Informational speech was modeled by literacy sponsors and utilized by the young children themselves. Art project, dramatic play, and games and puzzles were alternative tools in eliciting

informational speech from the young children and their literacy sponsors. The informational speech genre was not supported or reinforced with traditional expository texts. The young children's nonfiction genre knowledge was initially constructed through the informational speech genre.

Study Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

During the third observation, children selected from a collection of nonfiction and fiction books I deemed to be interesting for this age group. Even though the majority of the book selections were fiction, children selected both nonfiction and fiction books. Future research could focus on the preferred genre when the books directly matched the personal interests of the individual children and when a larger selection of books was available. Parents and children could fill out interest surveys and then nonfiction and fiction books matching those specific topics could be introduced and read on repeated observations. The focus of these interactions would be to identify genre preferences, gender differences, and language exchanges between the child and his or her literacy sponsor while engaging with both nonfiction and fiction texts. If the books were more geared to the specific interests of the children ,would the choices be different? If children had more opportunity to engage with nonfiction texts would they enjoy and access these types of books more? These questions can only be answered through further research.

The findings of this study illuminated gender differences between the boys and girls in genre preferences and topics of interests. Boys were more interested in nonfiction books than girls but overall there was still a strong preference for fiction. The nonfiction books that boys were interested in were related to topics that are stereotypically reserved for boys. Are nonfiction books geared to boys? Are the topics gender-free or are they

biased towards males? What kinds of nonfiction are girls interested in? What would happen if nonfiction books matched topics that interested girls? Do girls prefer fiction because their mothers prefer fiction? An understanding of this gender difference may highlight the type of texts and sponsorship needed for both genders to benefit from earlier exposure to nonfiction. If children are not motivated to read nonfiction, then they may not develop genre knowledge well enough to counteract the dreaded fourth grade slump and to become critical readers of information.

A third limitation of this study is that the mothers all participated in the interviews and observations where as the fathers' contributions to the research were limited. Fathers were not directly targeted through the methodology of this study, but it would be interesting to complete follow up interviews and observations with them to determine their perspective of the nonfiction literacy events in their home. The father's role as a literacy sponsor requires further examination. Future research could focus on the genre of books fathers would select for their children, and how they used these books to interact with their children. Would the fathers' genre preference for nonfiction influence the selection of books for their children or would they stick with the traditional fiction literature? Would there be a gender bias in the selection of books for sons versus daughters? The specific role of the father as a literacy sponsor requires further exploration.

Implications

A major implication of this study is the need for education about nonfiction literacy development. How can one foster nonfiction literacy experiences if they are unaware of what they are or the purpose they serve? The majority of nonfiction

experiences were not identified as such by the literacy sponsors. It seemed as though their view of nonfiction texts conjured up visions of reference materials like dictionaries and encyclopedias and not appropriate literature and language for children. Parent and teacher education would help to expand the definition of nonfiction texts and bring awareness to the experiences and routines that young children were already participating in as means to expand upon them. Literacy sponsors could come to understand that nonfiction is not limited to traditional views but encompasses all sources of information including informational speech as expository text. Parents and teachers should consult with the local librarians and determine age appropriate, quality nonfiction books for children between two and five years of age. Literacy sponsors should be encouraged to incorporate nonfiction texts into their children's libraries and model reading these texts aloud to the young children. Children learn through example, therefore, if literacy sponsors actively engage in nonfiction, then the children's interest and comprehension in this genre might increase.

The use of informational speech genre by the children was an unexpected finding in this study. The participants in this study unknowingly incorporated this genre into their oral exchanges, which conjured up numerous questions. Sponsors should be made aware that they are using the informational speech genres and understand the routines that bring this type of language to the forefront. Workshops could target the different types of informational speech, the types of routines that naturally foster informational speech, and how to incorporate this type of speech into their daily lives as a means to promote nonfiction genre development. Hands-on activities could demonstrate how literacy sponsors could use a variety of informational speech to teach children about the world.

How to support informational speech with informational texts would be another key topic for parents and teachers to explore. If I had known the prevalence and value of the expository speech genre, I could have focused the observations on this speech genre. This is both a limitation and a direction for future research focusing on how adults model nonfiction text structure in their speech and how children incorporate those structures into their own speech.

Since nonfiction books are not commonly incorporated into the literacy experiences for young children, it is important for literacy sponsors to read and interact with nonfiction books written for children. Nonfiction books for young children cover a range of topics, provide information, and answer questions related to a child's own curiosities, yet children have limited experiences with them. Demystifying the concerns that nonfiction books are uninteresting, too difficult, or too advanced for such young children can only be achieved through multiple experiences with a variety of nonfiction texts. Discussions about the gender bias related to nonfiction would be an essential component to educating the literacy sponsors. Nonfiction is not just for boys, but are the nonfiction topics of transportation, animals, and weather stereotypically emphasized for one gender? Genre preferences of the literacy sponsors are another area that needs to be highlighted as sponsors may not understand that they are unconsciously limiting experiences with a specific genre due to their own preferences. The goal of this type of education is to increase the exposure young children have to nonfiction texts.

Literacy sponsors appeared to understand the importance of early reading experiences but did not see the value of early exposure to the genre of nonfiction. Reading books served numerous functions but was not used to promote specific genre

knowledge. Many of the books read aloud to children were fiction; therefore literacy sponsors were unknowingly fostering fiction genre knowledge. By limiting the experiences with nonfiction books, children were not building an equal foundation of nonfiction genre knowledge which is already limited in the early elementary grades (Duke, 2000). Early exposure to nonfiction teaches expository text structures, features and vocabulary that are for required to comprehend texts designed for reading to learn (Duke, 2003; Kayes & Duke, 1998; Leung, 2008; Mallett, 1999; Newkirk, 1986; Pappas, 1993; Parkes, 2003; Pike & Mumper., 2004; Wray & Lewis, 1997).

Literacy sponsors did not seem to understand the how genre knowledge fostered through reading was then demonstrated in the child's writing. Limited exposure to nonfiction means children have limited genre knowledge to incorporate into their own writing. Education highlighting how nonfiction texts act as models for young children's own attempts at expository writing is desperately needed (Britsch, 2001, Heller, 2006; Newkirk, 1989 Parkes, 2003; Smolkin & Donovan, 2003). In understanding the importance of early nonfiction genre development, literacy sponsors might be more inclined to expose young children to more nonfiction books on a regular basis. Increased exposure to nonfiction texts promotes genre knowledge that is necessary for both reading comprehension and writing events.

Literacy sponsors understood the importance of early reading experiences but did not seem to value writing experiences in the same manner. Literacy sponsors defined writing in terms of the child writing his or her own name and not in terms of emergent skill development. Emergent literacy is composed of three specific pieces reading, writing, and oral language and the literacy sponsors were limiting the writing component.

Children need more opportunities to participate in emergent writing activities as a part of literacy development. Literacy sponsors need to understand that by limiting access to writing materials, not facilitating writing on a daily basis, and not exposing children to nonfiction that they are hindering a significant component of emergent literacy. Why is this? How do literacy sponsors define literacy—is it just reading or do they include writing? Do they understand that literacy is comprised of three different components: reading, writing, and oral language? How could sponsors increase writing opportunities? What genre would be represented in young children's writing samples? What if the sponsors' definition of writing included components besides the child's name? There has been so much publicity about the importance of early reading that writing has taken a secondary role.

This study identified the sponsors of nonfiction literacy development and how those literacy sponsors shaped the nonfiction literacy routines and experiences of young children. Literacy sponsors played a significant role in the determining the amount and type of experiences young children had with nonfiction. Young children did have experiences with nonfiction texts when the definition of text expanded to include the informational speech genre. Education about the value and importance of early exposure to nonfiction texts is needed as literacy sponsors awareness of nonfiction was limited. Knowledge and awareness of the importance of nonfiction

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APPPENDICES
Appendix A

Interview Protocol-Parents

- What is your child curious about?
- How do you help your child explore and learn about this topic?
- What kinds of books would bring this topic to life for your child?
- What other types of materials do you read with your child?
- Compare the materials you read with your child and the materials you read for yourself.
- What types of things do you write every day? What kinds of things does your child write every day?
- What type of literacy events do you and your child participate in?
- Does your child participate in any other literacy activities outside of your home? At church? At play groups? Etc…
- What do you feel your role is in promoting your child's literacy development.
- Who else in your child's life, participates in literacy activities?
- What types of nonfiction texts exist for your child?
- Are there nonfiction books or texts that you think you might like to find for – child's name?

Appendix B

Interview Protocol- Teachers

- What are the children in your class curious about?
- How do you help your class explore and learn about this topic?
- What kinds of books would bring this topic to life for the children in your classroom?
- What other types of materials do you read with your class?
- Compare the materials you read with your class and the materials you read for yourself.
- What types of things do you write every day? What kinds of things does your class write every day?
- What type of literacy events do you and your class participate in?
- What do you feel your role is in promoting literacy development in your classroom?
- What are the outside forces that influence the literacy activities and events within your classroom?
- What types of nonfiction texts exist for the children in your classroom?
- Are there nonfiction books or texts that you think you might like to find for your classroom?

Appendix C

Adult Consent/Parent Permission Form
Investigator:
Kris Foyil MS

Purpose:
I am conducting this research project to complete a doctoral dissertation at Oklahoma State University. This study will focus on the literacy development of young children at home and at school. The purpose of this study is to highlight the literacy routines of young children including the activities, conversations, and materials that are used to promote literacy at home and at school. In addition, this study will focus on the individuals who promote early literacy learning in the lives of young children.

Procedures:
Participation in this study will include:

- 2-4 audio recorded discussions about your child's literacy activities. Each discussion will last no more than one hour at a time.
- Allowing the I to observe literacy activities of your child at home and at school. 3-5 observations at both locations will last no more than one hour at a time.
- Collection of materials used during literacy activities: including the books read with your child, books available to your child, videos watched by your child, websites visited, and drawings or writings completed by your child. These materials will placed in a pile within the home setting for the research to review on following visits.

Risks of Participation:
Participation is completely voluntary and you may choose to discontinue the research activity at any time without penalty. The risks for participating in this study are not greater than those encountered in daily life. Participants will not receive compensation or other benefits for their participation in this study. Participants will not encounter any negative consequences for declining to participate in the study.

Benefits:
By participating in this study, you will be providing information that will contribute to the general knowledge of early literacy development of young children. The results of this study will provide insight into the early literacy practices at home and at school that might lead to changes in attitudes and believes related to early literacy practices across natural environments.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you or your child. Research records will be stored securely in a locked box in the I's office and only the I will have

access to the records. No identifying information will be included in public presentations or publications that result from data collected during this study.

Contacts:

If you have questions you may contact me:
Kris Foyil at 918-688-9717 or kefoyil@cox.net at any point in the study.

Questions about your rights as a research volunteer may be directed to
Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB
219 Cordell North
Stillwater, OK 74078
405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form as been given to me. By signing this statement, you are consenting for yourself and your child to participate in this research study.

- ☐ I consent to participate in this research study.

- ☐ I consent for my child---------- to participate in this research study.

Participant's signature:
_____

Participant's Written Name: _____

I's Signature: _____

Date:_____

Appendix D

Consent Form Teachers
Investigator:
Kris Foyil MS

Purpose:
I am conducting this research project to complete a doctoral dissertation at Oklahoma State University. This study will focus on the literacy development of young children at home and at school. The purpose of this study is to highlight the literacy routines of young children including the activities, conversations, and materials that are used to promote literacy at home and at school. In addition, this study will focus on the individuals who promote early literacy learning in the lives of young children.

Procedures:
Participation in this study will include:

- 1-3 audio recorded discussions about your classroom literacy activities. Each discussion will last no more than one hour at a time.
- Allowing the I to observe literacy activities of students during the literacy instruction time within the classroom. 3-5 observations will last no more than two hours at a time.
- Collection of materials including: books used for read alouds, books used to promote a theme or lesson, and examples writing produced by children who are participating in the study that used during literacy activities including the books read to your students and drawings or writings completed by participating children.

Risks of Participation:
Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may choose to discontinue the research activity at any time without penalty. The risks for participating in this study are not greater than those encountered in daily life.
Participants will not receive compensation or other benefits for their participation in this study. Participants will not encounter any negative consequences for declining to participate in the study.

Benefits:
By participating in this study, you will be providing information that will contribute to the general knowledge of early literacy development of young children. The results of this study will provide insight into the early literacy practices at home and at school that might lead to changes in attitudes and believes related to early literacy practices across natural environments.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only the I will have access to the records.

Contacts:

If you have questions you may contact me:
Kris Foyil at 918-688-9717 or kefoyil@cox.net at any point in the study.

Questions about your rights as a research volunteer may be directed to
Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB
219 Cordell North
Stillwater, OK 74078
405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form as been given to me. By signing this statement, you are consenting to participate in this research study.

☐ I consent to participate in this research study.

Participant's signature:
_____

Participant's Written Name: _____

I's Signature: _____

Date:_____

VITA

Kristine Elizabeth Foyil

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor in Philosophy

Dissertation: EXPLORING THE NONFICTION LITERACY EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG CHILDREN

Major Field: Professional Education/Literacy and Technology

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in your Professional Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 2011.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Sciences in Speech Language Pathology at University of Tulsa, Tulsa, OK in 2002.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Speech Language Pathology at University of Tulsa, Tulsa, OK in 2011.

Experience:

Professional Memberships:

American Speech-Language- Hearing Association
Oklahoma Speech-Language- Hearing Association

Name: Kristine Elizabeth Foyil Date of Degree: May, 2011

Institution: Oklahoma State University Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: EXPLORING THE NONFICTION LITERACY EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG CHILDREN

Pages in Study: 166 Candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy

Major Field: Professional Education

Scope and Method of Study:

Research has demonstrated that before fourth grade, young children have limited experiences with nonfiction texts. The majority of studies about nonfiction literacy development focus on school age children and there is limited information about younger children and their experiences with nonfiction. This multiple case study examined how young children between the ages for two and five years of old experienced and developed nonfiction literacy. The literacy events and routines of 13 children, their families and their classroom environments were analyzed using the constant comparative and thematic analysis methods to understand how nonfiction literacy development is shaped by literacy sponsors. This study answered the following research questions: 1) who are the sponsors of nonfiction literacy development for young children ages two to five years old? 2) How do sponsors shape the nonfiction literacy routines and experiences for young children ages two to five years old? 3) What kinds of nonfiction genre knowledge do young children construct during their nonfiction literacy routines?

Findings and Conclusions:

Findings indicate that nonfiction literacy development was sponsored by people, the places they enact and their personal practices. The people who sponsored the young children's nonfiction literacy experiences included parents, teachers, siblings, grandparents and the child. The places included school, the community, and the library. Personal practices related to religion, reading and writing shaped the young children's nonfiction literacy experiences. The informational speech genre mirrored the expository text structures of descriptive, procedural/sequential, cause and effect and compare and contrast texts. Alternative texts like dramatic play, games and puzzles, and art provided a space for informational speech. Implications of these finding are discussed.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Jennifer Sanders

ADVISER’S APPROVAL: Dr. Jennifer Sanders